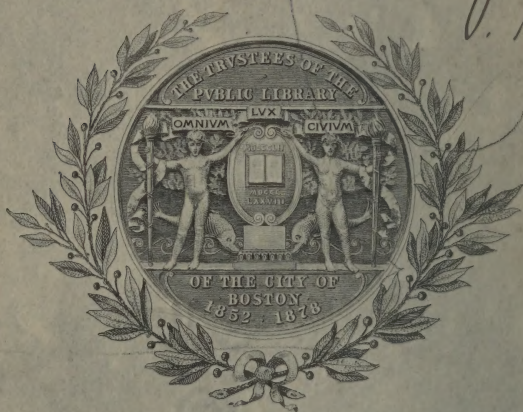




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# HISTORY

OF THE

## ANTI-CORN-LAW LEAGUE.

BY

ARCHIBALD PRENTICE,

ONE OF ITS EXECUTIVE COUNCIL,

AUTHOR OF

"HISTORICAL SKETCHES OF MANCHESTER;" "A TOUR IN THE UNITED STATES," &c.

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TO JOHN CHILDS, Esq.

OF BUNGAY, IN SUFFOLK,

A ZEALOUS PROMOTER, FROM EARLY MANHOOD, OF  
CIVIL, RELIGIOUS, AND COMMERCIAL LIBERTY,  
AND, WITH THE ABLE ASSISTANCE OF JOSEPH HUME

AND A FEW OTHER COADJUTORS,

THE SUCCESSFUL ABATER OF THE MONOPOLY  
WHICH TRIPLED OR QUADRUPLD THE PRICE OF THE  
BIBLE,

THIS HISTORY OF THE  
DESTRUCTION OF ANOTHER UNRIGHTEOUS MONOPOLY,  
IS INSCRIBED, AS A TESTIMONY OF SINCERE RESPECT  
FOR HIS UNDEVIATING ADHERENCE TO PRINCIPLE,  
AND AS A MEMORIAL OF  
FORTY YEARS' UNINTERRUPTED FRIENDSHIP  
BETWEEN HIM AND THE AUTHOR.





## P R E F A C E.

IN my preface to "Historical Sketches and Personal Recollections of Manchester from 1792 to 1832," I said: "When I disposed of my interest in the *Manchester Times*, and retired from its management, after twenty-three years' labour as a journalist, it was suggested to me that as, for a considerable part of my life, I had taken part in movements for important purposes, a biographical memoir would be well received. The suggestion was natural enough from those who, having read my newspaper from the time they left school until they were men, taking an active part in public business, regarded me as their political teacher. My reply was, that there was nothing in the events of my life that would interest any one beyond the narrow limits of a local "School;" but, on farther consideration, I thought that some account of the progress of liberal opinion in such a place as Manchester, and brief notices of the part, however humble, I had taken in its formation, would be not uninteresting and not unimportant to its inhabitants, and those of the surrounding very

populous district; and that there and elsewhere the history of what had been done might be an encouragement further to do."

In that volume I endeavoured to show how the despised minority, patient and persevering, became the overwhelming majority, and how one reform, to be the instrument of obtaining other necessary reforms, was at length triumphantly obtained. It appeared to me, that to show how that instrument was used, and what part Manchester took in subsequent struggles for the repeal of the Corn Law, which ought to have been the first fruit of the Reform Act, would be fit occupation for the historian's pen; and when the second edition of the "Historical Sketches" was put to press, I began to prepare materials for their continuation in another publication. I soon found that the History of the League would, of itself, require to be given at a length which would preclude the insertion of any of my personal recollections of Manchester, except such as would relate to events which led to the prominent part taken by this great town in the arduous struggle for free trade.

It may be an objection to my undertaking that it is too early to write a history so recently terminated; and, certainly, an actor in the events recorded might look back, after a series of years, with greater calmness than he may be supposed to experience when he writes immediately



after the heat of the contest; but as Mr. Roebuck, in his *History of the Whigs*, remarks, “a contemporary historian is a witness as well as an historian—a witness, indeed, giving his testimony under the best security for its accuracy; liability to instant denial and searching cross-examination.”

A more serious objection may be, that an impartial history cannot be expected from one whose participation in the movement might influence his judgment to a more favourable view of the persons who led it, and a more unfavourable one of those who determinedly opposed it, than either class deserved. To this my reply would be, that he who has been a partizan from a deep conviction of the humanity and justice of a cause, is quite as likely to be a truthful historian as one who, not having formed any decisive opinion as to the necessity of the contest on one side or the other, held aloof from it, and was utterly indifferent to its great results.

A more formidable objection presented itself when I first contemplated a *History of the League*—the difficulty of speaking of living men, its members, without incurring the charge of adulation; but, on consideration, I felt that while I confined myself to a faithful, plain, and unambitious narrative of their labours, the charge could not justly be laid at my door. A retrospection of the whole circumstances

of the movement rather inclines me to wonder why, during its continuance, I did not feel a higher admiration of the bravery, the knowledge, the prudence, and the patriotism of its leaders.

For any sins of commission or omission in this work I alone am responsible. I have consulted no one as to what I should put in or leave out, and no one has seen my manuscript but the printer. I have thus preserved the freedom which an author ought to enjoy when he is recording the actions of men, many of whom are his associates and personal friends, while they are freed from any suspicion of having assisted in the record of their own doings.

*Manchester, 15th December,*

1852.

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# HISTORY OF THE ANTI-CORN-LAW LEAGUE.

## CHAPTER I.

### 1832.—ASSERTION OF FREE-TRADE PRINCIPLES.

There was no great town in the United Kingdom, throwing a powerful influence upon the agitation in favour of the Reform Bill, which, more than Manchester, kept steadily in view the practical measures that might be expected as the result of an amendment of the representative system. In other places there was a laudable impatience of the absurdity, apparent to all who possessed a portion of common sense, of permitting a mound of earth to send two members to Parliament, while great manufacturing or commercial towns, each the centre and market of important districts, sent none; but nowhere more than in Manchester—perhaps nowhere so much—was the attention placed upon the end while endeavouring to obtain the means. From 1815, to the period when some considerable parliamentary reform was seen to be inevitable, its necessity was mainly argued from the impolicy and the injustice of the corn laws; and the strong conviction of the impoverishing effects of the landowners' monopoly gave concentration to the energy which was put forth to obtain such a representation as would guarantee the adoption of free trade. Free trade, then, in the first

place, peace, non-intervention in the affairs of other states, retrenchment, full religious liberty, the abolition of slavery in our colonies, wide constituencies in municipal elections, protection to the voter, and parliaments more frequently accountable to the people, were the objects sought to be obtained; and, these kept always in view, an earnest and effective effort was made for the Reform Bill, as the instrument by which they were to be accomplished. To this constant forward look to the practical, may be attributed the lead which Manchester took in the anti-corn-law movement. The first election was to be a protest against monopoly, and the strongest that could be made, as it was believed that the representatives of great constituencies would have an influence in the newly constituted House of Commons proportionate to the number of voters represented.

Strangely enough, the first candidate for the representation of the new borough was one who seemed to be perfectly indifferent about free trade, and, until the eve of the first election, strenuously opposed to any change that would interfere with the interests of the West India planters, all monopolists, and, to prevent innovation, the supporters of every monopoly. In the first week of 1830 William Cobbett had delivered four lectures in Manchester to crowded audiences. His leading propositions were, that lessening the amount of the currency had increased its value; that the increase had added to the claims of all creditors, and especially of the public creditors; and that the consequent fall in the price of every commodity, without a correspondent reduction of taxes, had occasioned intolerable distress. Two omissions, however, were remarked upon by even his most ardent admirers,—the monopoly of the corn growers, and the want of such representation in the House of Commons as would counteract the predominant influence of the landowners. But from the period at which speculation commenced as to

the probability of the Penrhyn seats being transferred to Manchester, Mr. Cobbett had been talked of by his disciples as the most fit and proper representative of the new borough; and had he been a man of ordinary prudence, he might have gained a strong body of adherents, for he had many admiring readers within its limits. It was his peculiarity, however, that in brandishing his formidable club he was as apt to strike friend as foe; and on the question of West India slavery he had absolutely gone out of his way to "hit" at a most respectable and influential body of men amongst his anticipated constituents.

In 1828, in advocating, in the *Manchester Times*, the abolition of slavery, I had stated the great cost of our West India colonies to the mother country, and had expressed my regret that Mr. Cobbett had bestowed much abuse on the abolitionists, and attributed the then distress of the planters to the efforts of the abolition party, when he ought to have known that their embarrassments, proceeding from the gross mismanagement of their estates, had existed long before any strenuous effort had been made for the manumission of their human chattels. In a letter to the electors of Manchester, dated 1st October, 1828—for he was then a candidate for its representation—he said: "How shall I express my contempt of the man who could have put upon paper the falsehood, that I have branded as cansters and hypocrites '*all* who think that Englishmen ought not to be taxed in order to enable the owners of estates in the West Indies to hold their black brethren in thralldom.' There is no answer to a falsehood like this, other than that of calling the utterers by a name which need not be put on paper, but which will suggest itself to every man. But, gentlemen, the thing to admire here is, the profound, the gross, the worse than animal ignorance of this Mr. Prentice, who sets himself up as a teacher of politics to the enlightened people of Manchester. He does not know, then, that the old West India

Islands have not taken from England, for ages and ages, one single penny in the way of tax; that while millions on millions have been squandered on the worthless colonies of North America, the West India colonies have not only maintained their own internal government, and paid the troops stationed there, but have been loaded with enormous charges in the shape of pensions and sinecures to the aristocracy of England. \* \* \* The blacks may be Mr. Prentice's brethren for anything I know or care; but the West India proprietors and occupiers are the brethren of Englishmen; and Englishmen have stood by and seen them taxed without mercy, but have never paid one farthing of tax for them."

Although the reiterated statement that the sum of £3,800,000. a-year was drained from the people of this country for the support of our slave colonies, remained uncontradicted, some of the persons in Manchester who called themselves Mr. Cobbett's friends, in August, 1832, placarded the town with his article of 1828, containing the charges of "malignant falsehood" and "worse than brutal ignorance;" and it was the policy of those persons to raise a prejudice against many of its inhabitants, who had laboured earnestly for the improvement of the poor at home, that they wished to waste people's sympathies on distant objects. While these injudicious adherents were thus giving currency to the abuse which he, in his indiscretion, lavished upon benevolent men, and adding to it all manner of vituperation upon the advocates for negro freedom, thinking that thus they were giving the best evidence of their zeal for the cause of their leader, he himself had been gradually opening his eyes to the gross iniquity of holding even "black men" in bondage, and to the fact that "slavery was made use of as the means of keeping us in slavery;" and he had plumply declared that it was no longer the question now whether we should abandon the West India Islands altogether, or uphold



slavery, but that he should support, to the utmost of his power, any man who would vote for its abolition. The following, addressed to the people of Manchester, gave much more surprise to those who were hunting on the wrong scent than it gave to the persons who had been vituperated :—" I have always said that I detested slavery in every form, and under every name; that I never would accept of the services of the slave when his master offered them to me for nothing; that, however, the question with us was, whether we should abandon the West Indian Islands, or continue to maintain this slavery. Since I was last in the north, I have *seen* quite enough to convince me, that it would be better to abandon the islands altogether than to uphold the negro slavery. It now appears, that, in fact, these slaves are in general the property of English boroughmongers; that they are so in great part at least; and that the fruit of the labour of these slaves has long been converted into the means of making us slaves at home. Travelling in Wiltshire some years ago, I found a whole village the property of one man, and I found the neighbouring borough one half his property also. His establishments were those of a prince, both in town and country, and I *now* find that the source of all this was the labour of slaves in Jamaica. Besides these discoveries, brought to light by recent meetings, of the aristocracy being the chief proprietors in the islands, there are the bloody transactions which have *recently* taken place; there is the *execution* of the dissenting ministers, whose offence appears to have been that of teaching the Christian religion to the slaves—that religion forbidding the holding of men in slavery. For these reasons, and particularly for the reason that slavery is made use of as the means of keeping us in slavery, I am resolved to support any man, to the utmost extent of my power, who shall propose the abolition of the slavery of the negroes. When I find the Marquis of Chandos, the Earl of Harewood,

and great numbers of the deadly enemies of reform, to be great holders of slaves, the natural conclusion is, that their continuing to hold slaves cannot be good to the people of England."

The conversion came too late, for it was regarded, as I believe unjustly, as a means of recommending himself to the abolitionists in Manchester, whom he had offended. In commenting upon it, I said,—“What will the persons who have been hunting on the wrong scent say now, when the dictator of their opinions acknowledges the truth of what we have always asserted, that the burdens of our otherwise overtaxed people at home are grievously aggravated by the demands which are made upon us to support the system of slavery in our colonies? Will they deny now, what we have always asserted, that of the miserable earnings of the labourer in Connaught and the weaver of Lancashire, a considerable portion is taken in order to furnish the West India proprietors with the chain and scourge with which they keep their fellow men in bondage? \* \* \* The abilities of a writer are one thing—the qualifications of a legislator another, and the fault of Mr. Cobbett—his utter want of discretion, is a most serious disqualification where an instant reply may be made. \* \* \* The truth is, Mr. Cobbett is too much under the influence of self-will to encounter practised and cunning debaters, and our conviction is, that after having been beaten or baffled by men whom he despises, and whom, probably, he has a right to despise as infinitely below him in intellect, but who, having facts at their finger's-end are enabled to meet declamation with figures, he would either retire from the contest altogether, or satisfy himself with an occasional oration without waiting for discussion.”

Soon after this the anti-slavery cause received an impulse in Manchester which operated further unfavourably on Mr. Cobbett's claims to its representation. On the 18th

of September, 1832, Mr. George Thompson, who had been zealously and effectually labouring in the cause of negro emancipation at Liverpool, made his appearance in Manchester, and delivered a lecture in Irwell-street Chapel, surrounded by a number of estimable persons of the Society of Friends, and before him as respectable and numerous an audience as ever had been congregated in Manchester. He was young and vigorous, self-possessed, clear and distinct in his articulation, with a voice modulated to be heard in a whisper or pealing like a bell; perfect master of all the facts and arguments of his case, and with great power of appeal to the moral and religious feelings of his auditors. He proceeded, in a strain of impassioned eloquence, to dwell upon the various evils which were peculiar to British colonial slavery, or were fostered, multiplied, and ripened under its influence. I can do no more than barely enumerate the frightful catalogue, every item of which was powerfully illustrated by the lecturer. Slavery cursed the soil—originated and perpetuated the sale of human beings—doomed helpless, innocent, and unoffending infants to interminable thralldom—depressed the body by labour, while it prostrated the mind by excluding the ordinary and required motives to exertion—entailed physical sufferings of every possible description—operated to produce a fearful process of depopulation—was characterised by gross inequality of law and right—by shameless maladministration even of those partial laws, and threw in the way of the slave almost insuperable obstacles to redress—created and continued an odious and inveterate distinction of caste—engendered ignorance in its worst forms, and most fearful consequences—extinguished self-respect in the bosom of the negro, while it inspired hateful feelings of arrogance and despotism in the breast of the master—rendered the negro dark, sullen, and revengeful—reduced the master from a state of refinement to one of debasement and de-

moralization—was a source of danger from assassinations, conspiracies, rebellions, the machinations of foreign foes, and the judgments of insulted Heaven—led to a disregard of religion, its practices, its ministers, its altars, its ordinances, and its disciples—to the demolition of chapels and the expatriation of missionaries—was the lasting cause of hostility and alienation between the colonies and the parent country—rendered those dependencies in which it existed in the greatest degree insecure—was as impolitic as it was inhuman—was as selfish and partial as it was impolitic—and was withal upheld at an expense of money, character, and life, sufficient to deter the mercenary and appal the humane—was inconsistent with our loud professions of attachment to the principles of civil and religious liberty—was a violation of the constitution of the land—a system of cowardice and murder, supported by means the most paltry and degrading—of decided irreligion and impiety—creating an amount of responsibility the most awful, and a load of guilt which it became a Christian nation to seek deliverance from without delay. Throughout the whole of Mr. Thompson's address there was the most profound and almost breathless attention, interrupted only by bursts of applause, excited by the frequent forcible and eloquent appeals to the morality and the justice of the audience. The more immediate effect was to detach from Mr. Cobbett many of his most influential friends amongst the electors of Manchester.

At the end of the previous June, Mr. Mark Philips issued his address to the electors. After referring to a requisition from 2,350 of his fellow townsmen, signed nearly twelve months before, he said that the arduous struggle which had in that interval taken place, had only more strongly confirmed his convictions that reforms beyond those which had been secured by the Reform Bill, were needed to complete the system of representation. He was therefore in favour of shortening the duration of parlia



ments, and, to prevent the reconstruction of close boroughs, of the ballot. He pledged himself to give his support to the most severe and rigid economy in expenditure, to the abolition of all useless places and unmerited pensions, and to the removal of the burden of even a necessary taxation from the industry to the property of the country. As good government essentially depended upon the general intelligence of the people, he should be most anxious to assist in removing all those taxes on knowledge which, to the disgrace of our system of taxation, obstructed the cheap and universal diffusion of information. He declared himself an enemy to all restrictions and monopolies, which, depriving alike the capitalist of his remuneration and the labourer of his wages, impeded the natural progress and prosperity of our trade. It would be the duty of a reformed parliament to abolish the East India, the Bank, and the timber monopolies, and that greatest of all monopolies which was upheld by the Corn Laws. Against the monopoly of the church, Mr. Philips did not so decidedly declare, but he said that tithes must be abolished, and an unexceptionable system of maintaining the clergy substituted, and such means adopted as would distribute the revenues of the church in a just and fair proportion to the duties to be discharged. In emphatic language he declared his unqualified detestation of slavery, and his conviction of the necessity of immediate emancipation. Mr. Philips did not undergo much cross examination when he addressed meetings in various wards, although some of the more ultra-Cobbettites tried to create a clamour against him, because he would not pledge himself to sponge out or reduce the national debt.

The candidate brought forward by the Tories and Corn-law protectionists was Mr. John Thomas Hope, a nephew of the Earl of Hopeton, their leaning to rank being stronger than their desire to have a representation of their trading interests. In other respects their choice was a

judicious one. He was of a family of great respectability, and deservedly respected. He had courteous and conciliating manners, possessed a gentlemanly appearance, and was a pleasing speaker. He was a great favourite with his party, and was looked upon by his political opponents with much indulgence—the more, perhaps, because they saw very little danger of his being elected member for Manchester. He could not expect to be returned for such a town for his conservatism alone. It was necessary that he should promise some advantages to a manufacturing constituency, and, on his appearance in the Exchange Dining-room, on the 24th July, after stating that although he had opposed the Reform Bill as it then stood, he was bound to acquiesce in the decision of the legislature, he acknowledged the necessity of some change in the government of India; and declared, amidst loud cheers, that he was fully prepared to open a free commercial intercourse with that country. His feelings, he said, were in favour of the abolition of slavery in our West Indian colonies, but he was afraid that the emancipation would cause an increase of slave labour in the countries over which we had no control, and that therefore he could not support any equalization of the sugar duties. He thought British agriculture required protection, but would prefer a moderate fixed duty to a sliding scale. I was curious to learn what Mr. Hope would think a moderate duty, and asked how much he would have it to be. A perfect hurricane of groans and angry shouts arose, and an obvious determination was shown that the question should not be answered. I waited till it subsided, and again asked, “How much?” The storm was renewed. Again I waited till it was over, and again asked, “How much?” Mr. Hope seemed to be ashamed of the violence manifested by his supporters, but afraid of giving a distinct answer, and he resumed his speech by saying, “I shall be glad to meet all the difficulties by which I know

this question is surrounded ; but in coming to a decision I should studiously keep in view all the varied interests of this great community which would be affected by it." He concluded a well delivered speech by saying : " I beg distinctly to state that I will not be bound by any decided pledges on any particular question. On any other subject I shall now be happy to give any explanation, subject, however, to the qualification to which I have alluded."

Mr. Samuel Jones Loyd made his first public appearance as a candidate, in the Exchange, on Thursday, July 12th, introduced by conservatives, and addressed the subscribers there assembled from the bar counter. I endeavoured to catch some definite exposition of principle in the midst of the very vague generalities which formed the staple of his speech. Occasionally there was a tone of liberality that might lead one to think that a more explicit utterance was to follow ; but nothing explicit did follow, except that he would rather have the general concurrence of the constituency than the support of any party, and that he warned the electors not to choose representatives from that class of persons " who, with the best intentions, but with more zeal and ardour than discretion, would wildly rush through the temple of our constitution, and with a bold and reckless hand, proceed to remove the pillars and buttresses on which it rested ; with an honest view, no doubt, of letting light into its recesses, and widening its avenues, but at the imminent risk, as he conceived, of levelling the whole edifice to the ground." Like Mr. Hope, too, he expressed himself unwilling to give pledges which might fetter his independence. It appeared doubtful whether his speech savoured most of stand-still toryism, or somewhat progressive whiggism ; but there was a *sound* of liberalism about it that took well with his hearers. I resolved to hear him a second time in the belief that something might be uttered to show more decidedly what his political opinions were.

The opportunity soon occurred, for on Thursday, August 2nd, Mr. Loyd appeared on a platform on the Clarendon Inn bowling green, in Chorlton-upon-Medlock, to address the electors of that township. His speech was as vague as that which he had delivered in the Exchange, and like that had a tone of liberalism about it which made it acceptable to the greater number of his hearers, consisting almost entirely of electors; and it required some moral courage to attempt to show the hollowness of the professions which the audience had recognised as being made in good faith. As the election for one of the representatives of Manchester turned upon the cross-examination which he underwent at the close of his speech, I copy some of the questions and answers from my paper at the time:—

MR. PRENTICE: Mr. Loyd has said that the duty on the importation of corn ought to be no more than to repay the agriculturist for the peculiar taxes he pays. Does Mr. Loyd mean to say that the agricultural is taxed more than the trading community, and therefore entitled to peculiar protection? MR. LOYD: The agriculturists contend that they do, and they are entitled to be heard, and it will be my duty to give the subject a fair and due consideration. (Cries of Oh! Oh!)—MR. P.: Then am I to understand that Mr. Loyd in speaking of protection, has been expressing not his own opinions but those of the agriculturists? This question was not answered, Mr. Loyd's friends clustering round him, and assuring him it was one which he was not called upon to answer.—MR. P.: Will Mr. Loyd say at what period in the progress of the Reform Bill he became convinced that it ought to be supported, and when he would have supported it had he been in the House of Commons? MR. L.: I cordially assent to the great principles of the Bill—disfranchisement and enfranchisement, and would have given them my support.—MR. P.: Mr. Loyd has not said *when*—I ask him then to say if he would have supported the second reading? MR. L.: I think the question has already received a sufficient answer. (Loud disapprobation, mixed with faint cheers from the hustings.)—MR. P.: I repeat my question. Would Mr. Loyd have voted for the second reading of that Bill by which Manchester was enfranchised? MR. L.: I was always in favour of Manchester being represented. (A storm of disapprobation, and cries of "answer the question.")—MR. P.: I will again repeat the question. Would Mr. Loyd have voted for the second reading of the Reform Bill? And will



he favour me with an answer, Yes or No? (Loud cheers.) Mr. L.: I would have supported the principles of enfranchisement and disfranchisement, and would have voted for schedules A. and B. (Great hooting, and cries of "why don't you say Aye or No?" and faint cheering on the hustings.)—Mr. P.: Well, well. Allow me now to ask Mr. Loyd if he will vote that electors be protected by the Ballot? (Cheers.) Mr. L.: The Ministers who brought forward the measure of reform, and by whose exertions it was carried, have repeatedly declared that it is a full, sufficient, and satisfactory measure, and I trust that it will lead to the accomplishment of much good; and I have a confident expectation that when it has been fully tried, it will be satisfactory to the people. (Cheers on the hustings, and loud cries from all other parts of the meeting of "why don't you answer the question?")—Mr. P.: I repeat my question. Will Mr. Loyd say whether he will support the Ballot or will not? Mr. L.'s FRIENDS: Don't answer the question, you have answered it already. Mr. L.: I conceive I have already answered the question. (Loud hootings.)—Mr. P.: Will Mr. Loyd vote for the repeal of the Septennial Act? Mr. L.'s FRIENDS: Don't answer him; there is no end to his questions. Mr. L.: (obviously in very considerable perturbation,) I conceive that the answer is implied in my answer to the previous question. (Great disapprobation.)—Mr. P.: That is to say you will *not* vote for the Ballot or the repeal of the Septennial Act.—Mr. P.: Should a Police Bill be brought into the House, giving to every rate-payer in Manchester the right, which every rate-payer in the township of Chorlton Row has, of voting in the choice of police commissioners, will he support it? (Loud cheers.) Mr. L.: It seems to be expected of me that I should begin to exercise the duties of a legislator before I get into the House. (Loud expressions of contempt from the meeting, vainly attempted to be drowned in wild cheering from the hustings.)—Mr. P.: I trust Mr. Loyd will give me an answer to my question. (Cries of "you have had it," from Mr. Loyd's friends.) Well then, I will put it in another shape. When he is in Committees of the House of Commons, on Police Bills generally, will he recognise the principle that every payer of rates should have a vote in the choice of the persons who are to expend his money? Mr. L.: (who had now become exceedingly dogged and looked as black as Erebus) said this was only asking the question he had answered already. (The storm of contempt now completely overpowered the expressions of approbation from the hustings, and symptoms of preparation for retreat became manifest.)—Mr. P.: Will Mr. Loyd, in order to remedy the abuses of the legislature on local affairs, refuse his support to any Local Bill which has not received the support of the majority of those whose interests it affects? (Great hubbub on the hustings.) Mr. L.: It seems a reasonable proposition,

but I cannot legislate till I see measures before me.—Mr. P. : I will ask Mr. Loyd no more questions. The meeting will see that it is quite useless. (Cries of "aye; it's no use; he won't do for us.") Mr. Loyd and his friends now retreated hastily from the hustings although a person named Turner had put a question to him about the Short-time Bill, which he was deputed to ask by the body of cotton spinners.—Mr. PRENTICE: Gentlemen, after the manner in which Mr Loyd has answered the questions put to him, and the manner he has left the meeting, without giving any other person an opportunity of questioning him, I will put one question to *you* which you can at once answer aye or no, which is more than Mr. Loyd can do. Do you think Mr. Loyd a fit and proper person to represent you in parliament? This question was followed by an instant, loud, and universal "No," that spoke destruction to Mr. Loyd's hopes in Chorlton-upon-Medlock.

There were now four candidates in the field, and for each there was a newspaper. Mr. Cobbett's cause was advocated by the *Manchester and Salford Advertiser*, edited by Mr. James Whittle, a good hater, who wished to send to the House one who would tell the whigs that they were base, bloody, and brutal. Mr. Philips had the earnest aid of the *Manchester Times* because he was a thorough free trader, and a progressive reformer, considerably in advance of the whig administration. Mr. Hope, as a tory, was consistently supported by the *Courier*. Mr. Loyd, as a professed whig who would not practically be much ahead of stand-still conservatism, had the earnest, so far as it could be earnest, advocacy of the *Guardian*, which gave a faint support to Mr. Philips, not on account of his political opinions, which were too decided to suit its taste, but because there was next to a certainty that he would be elected, and it might as well sail so far with the stream. *Wheeler's Chronicle* also gave such support as it could give to Mr. Loyd.

There were four candidates in the field, and each had the support of a newspaper thoroughly devoted to his interests; but there was not a candidate for the votes of each of the four distinct classes of politicians amongst the electors—radicals, whig-radicals, whigs, and tories, for Mr.

Loyd was nearer to conservatism than to whiggism. Reformers knew from the first that neither Cobbett nor Hope could be returned, and the questions were whether Loyd was a fit man to be returned along with Philips, and, whether the progressive party had strength enough in the electoral body to return two members, without the aid of a considerable number of whigs who had hastily given in their adhesion to Loyd. I had no doubt on the first question. To send a man to the House who, had he been there, would have opposed the most popular parts of the Bill by which Manchester was enfranchised, would have been a most deplorable political suicide. After his appearance on the Chorlton-upon-Medlock bowling green, I felt bound further to show that he was not the man to receive the suffrages of free traders, believing that the exposition of his unfitness might bring another and a better man into the field, and in my paper of August 4th, I said: "When Mr. Samuel Jones Loyd came forward to claim the suffrages of the electors of Manchester in an address which, though abounding in professions of liberality, contained not one single sentence which could enable any one to form an opinion as to what his real principles were, we naturally looked to the characters of the persons who were publicly supporting him, that, from the company he kept, we might judge what he was; and, when we saw that one of the most prominent among them was Hugh Hornby Birley, a man who, with the stain of the 16th August, 1819, upon him, attaches a stain on all on whom he inflicts his friendship; and that three-fourths of the others were the known enemies of reform, and the known persecutors of reformers; that there were not half a dozen of them all who, in their lives, had ever done a single act for the removal of any national or local abuse, we concluded that he was not the man who was likely to unite the suffrages of the newly enfranchised electors of Manchester. Nor was the assurance which Mr. Loyd gave to Mr. John Edward Taylor

(of the *Guardian*), and which seemed to give entire satisfaction to that very consistent, and very thorough, and very disinterested reformer, that in the progress of the Reform Bill, he had been made a convert to its principles, at all satisfactory to us. We wished to know what real meaning was couched under the vague generalities of his address, but no public opportunity was given to any one to pull off the mask which we verily believed to be worn. On Thursday, however, at the request, it is said, of many respectable inhabitants of the township of Chorlton-upon Medlock, Mr. Loyd came openly before the electors, and after a turgid speech, full of high-sounding words, carefully divested of all definite meaning, submitted himself to the ordeal of examination. From a report which had been pretty widely circulated that his committee had represented to him the necessity of expressing his opinion more unequivocally than he had done, it was generally believed that he would give some indication of being animated with the spirit of reform, and many honest but timid reformers who were disposed to support him, but remained in some doubt as to his real principles, attended, really desirous that he would explain himself a little more explicitly and a little more boldly. It is impossible to describe the effect which his answers produced. The electors had seen Mr. Mark Philips undergo the same ordeal, and had observed, with approbation, his honesty, ability, temper, and modesty. They had also seen Mr. Hope subjected to a searching examination, and, though they had disapproved of his principles, they had admired the straightforward way in which he had avowed them, and the gentlemanly courtesy of his manners. Having seen this, they expected, almost as a matter of course, that Mr. Loyd would at least show good temper if he had not ability, and address if he had not principle: but never were expectations so disappointed. We believed that the turgid speech would be followed by the dishonest shuffle, and we soon saw that our belief was



well founded, for never, in all our experience of public appearances, did we see so miserable an exhibition ;—we do not mean with regard to talent, for, where the intention is right, allowances are always made for the absence of ability ;—we do not mean with regard to manners and temper, because the best and ablest of men may be uncouth and want equanimity ; but we mean in the absence of every quality which men would desire in a legislator, and especially in the absence of honesty, the possession of which, without one particle of talent, would have saved him from an extent of evasion and shuffle degrading to any man in any station, but in one who, if wealth can make the gentleman, ought to be one, was not only degrading but disgusting. Let any one read how he tried to avoid answering the searching question, (to Mr. Loyd more searching than to the auditors it seemed) if he would have supported the second reading of the Reform Bill, and he will not wonder that the persons assembled, who heard him speak throughout with marked attention, and occasionally with applause, should have expressed their feelings with groans and hootings, and that his questioner, who began his examination respectfully, should, as he went on, have changed his tone to that of an indignant counsel who has got a fencing and shuffling witness in the witness box. We learn that a number of those who purposed to support Mr. Loyd while they believed that he was a reformer, are now heartily ashamed of him, and are anxiously looking about for some straightforward man to be put in nomination in his stead."

## CHAPTER II.

### THE ELECTION FOR MANCHESTER.

At the beginning of September, after having taken some pains to ascertain the strength of the supporters of the several candidates, I ventured to say that two-thirds were reformers, of various grades, and that, if no other candidate was brought forward, the following would be an approximation to the distribution of votes :—

Two thousand tories, of whom 500 would give plumpers to Hope, 250 would split between Cobbett and Hope, with the intention of keeping out Philips, and 1,250 who would split between Hope and Loyd, believing the latter to be in heart a tory ;

Two thousand reformers to the extent of the Reform Bill, who would split between Loyd and Philips, choosing the former in preference to Cobbett, or being bound to vote for him by obligations to, or the influence of, Mr. Loyd's bank ;

One thousand five hundred reformers who considered the bill as a step to further reforms, of whom 500 would give plumpers to Philips, and 1,000 who would split between Philips and Cobbett ;

One thousand reformers who looked to the reduction or extinction of the national debt, of whom 250 would give plumpers to Cobbett, and 750 would split between Cobbett and Philips.

The following was given as the result of this calculation, followed by some comments :—

	Hope.	Loyd.	Philips.	Cobbett.
First Class Plumpers ..	500 ....	— ....	— ....	—
Split Votes.....	1,500 ....	1,250 ....	— ....	—
Second Class Plumpers..	— ....	— ....	— ....	250
Split Votes.....	— ....	2,000 ....	2,000 ....	—
Third Class Plumpers ..	— ....	— ....	500 ....	—
Split Votes.....	— ....	— ....	1,000 ....	1,000
Fourth Class Plumpers..	— ....	— ....	— ....	250
Split Votes.....	— ....	— ....	750 ....	750
	<hr/> 2,000	<hr/> 3,250	<hr/> 4,250	<hr/> 2,250

Mr. Cobbett's firm friends would not, however, withdraw him. They thought it would strengthen his influence, if, in addition to his return for Oldham, he could have fifteen hundred or two thousand votes recorded for him in Manchester. There was a certainty then of Loyd being returned as the colleague of Philips, unless another popular candidate were brought forward. I represented this certainty to Mr. Cobbett's friends, and argued that to stand for Manchester and be rejected, would rather diminish than increase his influence in the country; but they were desperate in their duty. In allusion to the sudden change of his opinions upon the slavery question, I asked one of them what he would say, if the author of the *Register* were suddenly to turn round to his former notion that the West India islands cost us nothing, and he replied, "Say! What could I say, but that he had good reason for turning?" Many of his supporters were good radicals, disposed to promote radicalism irrespective of individual claims to support; but many, and those the most active, were only "Cobbettites," who imagined that the advancement of their leader was the assertion of a principle.

Much discussion took place as to the candidate to be

brought forward. Loyd's friends had been in the field, and had obtained many promises of support. To oppose a man of his immense wealth, and so powerful in the local and ledger influence which he possessed by being the head partner in our greatest banking establishment, it was necessary to look out for one who could enlist some equally powerful counteracting influence. It was proposed that some member of the whig administration should be selected. On being consulted on this point, for having the direction of such influence as a popular newspaper possessed, some importance was attached to the course I might pursue, I stated my opinion that a member of the administration was not likely to make the best representative of the district, for although his being in office might be advantageous in matters of minor business arrangement, his position would prevent that healthy influence upon public opinion, tardy, as all governments were, to adopt wide and decisive measure of relief to the people, which a less trammelled representative, speaking in the name of a large and important constituency, might exercise. At length it was proposed that some member of the government who was known to be in advance of his colleagues on questions of reform, and especially of commercial reform, should be sought for, and Mr. Charles Poulett Thomson, then Vice-President of the Board of Trade, was pointed at, the possession of such office being thought, in a great manufacturing district, likely to counteract the ledger influence of the wealthy banker.

Thomson had been the representative of Dover. Jeremy Bentham had thought so well of him, as to leave his "Hermitage," in Queen's Square Place, and personally canvass for him, greatly helping to secure his election for that place. He was understood to hold firmly most of the political doctrines of that great reformer; and he had, in 1830, made an excellent speech in favour of free trade.



If we were to have a minister as our representative, a minister who was for progression was to be preferred, and such a man, after much private enquiry, it appeared to me that Thomson was. The choice seemed to be only between him and Loyd. I attended a private meeting at which he was formally proposed. Mr. J. C. Dyer strongly urged the propriety of opposing a reformer to one who had obviously adopted the doctrine of finality, and had only acquiesced in the Reform Bill when, without his support, it had become law. Mr. George Wilson, then a very young man (afterwards to distinguish himself in the Anti-Corn-Law struggle), already skilled, by taking part in local contests, in the systematic method of conducting elections, expressed his strong belief that two decided reformers could be returned for Manchester. Mr. George Hadfield, now Member of Parliament for Sheffield, a staunch reformer and dissenter, expressed his confidence in the same result; but lamented that the whole of the Manchester papers were against them, except one which was not with them. A laugh arose, for I was standing behind him, ready to give in my adherence, and to assure the meeting that all that I could do, as the editor of a paper and as an elector, by my pen and my voice, would be done to prevent a compromise of principle, always a dangerous example, and to send two free traders and reformers into the house. On the 6th of September, the following address from Mr. Thomson's committee appeared:—

TO THE INDEPENDENT ELECTORS OF MANCHESTER.

Gentlemen,—Under the peculiar circumstances in which the Right Honourable C. Poulett Thompson is placed he cannot, with propriety, be called upon at present to issue any Address, or personally to offer himself as a Candidate for this Borough. His well-known public character, however, renders either of these proceedings unnecessary.

It must be evident to every merchant and manufacturer, that the trade of this great district, and, through it, even the national welfare

have been frequently and seriously injured by the want, on the part of the government, of full and correct information on subjects connected with our manufactures and commerce; and that this has almost inevitably arisen from there having been, hitherto, no immediate connection between this particular community and any individual members of the administration. All persons conversant with public business know the difficulties which, from this cause, have constantly been experienced in bringing commercial subjects, and even the condition of the population dependant on manufactures and commerce, under the consideration of government and parliament.

Strongly impressed with the importance of obviating such difficulties, and with the conviction that the best means of doing so is to return as one of our representatives a member of the government, officially connected with the administration of commerce, we are induced most earnestly to recommend to your choice the Right Honourable C. Poulett Thompson, Vice-President of the Board of Trade, &c., whose enlightened views of rigid and extensive economy in the public expenditure, which were announced in his justly-celebrated speech of the 25th March, 1830, establish in the most satisfactory manner, that, both with reference to the extent of his knowledge and to the soundness of his financial, commercial, and political principles, he possesses high qualifications for the important and distinguished trust; and whose valuable services in obtaining the repeal of the Print Duty, especially entitle him to the warm acknowledgments of the inhabitants of this district.

To him also, as one of the ministers to whom the country owes the Reform Acts, the public gratitude, support, and confidence, are due.

The committee would not conceal the responsibility which rests upon it, in venturing to recommend to your suffrage a candidate for the representation of this important community; and begs to assure you that it has been prompted by no other motives than the desire to see those pledges redeemed (of returning reform representatives), which were virtually made to the ministry and the country, by the warm, general, and distinguished exertions Manchester has displayed in the cause of reform; that it has no interests which are not common to yourselves—the good of the country, and the honour and welfare of the borough; objects which, it sincerely believes, can only be accomplished by the return of honest, enlightened, and firm friends to the principles of reform.

The committee has thus explained some of the reasons which have induced it to address you; and hereby announces a DETERMINATION TO PUT INTO NOMINATION, AT THE ENSUING ELECTION, THE RIGHT

HONOURABLE C. POULETT THOMSON, Vice-President of the Board of Trade, and earnestly requests the honour of your co-operation and support.

On behalf of the committee,

J. C. DYER, Chairman, *pro tempore*.

September 6, 1832.

There was an arduous contest before the free traders of Manchester, and they were fully aware of it; but they felt that on the first election it was necessary to set an example that should influence future elections. If, on the first exercise of their elective right, a coalition between moderate whigs and moderate tories were to be triumphant, it might be expected that a spirit of compromise would be introduced, which would continue to take the place of the assertion of independent principles. It was felt that to send any member who would not strive, heart and hand, for freedom of trade, would be an abandonment of one of the principal grounds on which the Reform Bill was demanded; and that the election of one, who, had he possessed the opportunity, would have deprived that measure of some of its best and most popular features, would be to acknowledge its finality. The contest was felt to be one, not for 1832, not for one session, not for the return of one man, but for a precedent that might rule for a long series of years—a precedent that would rescue Manchester from the contempt with which it would be regarded were it untrue to its known opinions on political and commercial reforms, and raise it to the highest rank amongst the newly enfranchised boroughs. There were many difficulties to be overcome before victory could be achieved; but that victory was to be the prelude of many successive electoral victories, and the promise of a future legislative victory over the grasping avarice of confederated monopolists. The opponents of coalition and compromise had principle, and knowledge, and zeal, and youthful activity on their side. The press teemed with their publications,

and every placard, every hand-bill, every letter, every leading article, was a popular elucidation of the truths of political economy; and thus Thomson's committee was the precursor of the Anti-Corn-Law League in the great work of public instruction.

The nomination took place on Wednesday, December 12th, in the presence of a great crowd, assembled in St. Ann's Square, the Boroughreeve, Mr. Benjamin Braidley, presiding as returning officer. Mr. Mark Philips was proposed by Mr. Edward Baxter, seconded by Mr. John Shuttleworth. Mr. John Fielden proposed Mr. Cobbett, seconded by Mr. Joseph Johnson. Mr. Thomas Sharp proposed Mr. Samuel Jones Loyd, seconded by Dr. Holme. Mr. William Crieie proposed Mr. John Thomas Hope, seconded by Mr. F. Aspinall Phillips. Mr. Benjamin Heywood, the late member for the county, proposed Mr. Charles Poulett Thomson, seconded by Mr. George Hadfield. Mr. Philips, Mr. Cobbett, and Mr. Loyd spoke from the hustings. Mr. Hope attempted to speak, but the noise and tumult prevented his being heard, and he desisted. Mr. J. C. Dyer, as representative of Mr. Thomson, who had never offered himself as a candidate, was equally unsuccessful. The show of hands was decidedly in favour of Philips and Cobbett. A poll was demanded on behalf of the other candidates, and the polling commenced on Thursday morning, at nine o'clock. At ten Philips stood first, and then Thomson, Loyd, Hope, and Cobbett, and this order was preserved throughout the day. At four o'clock the poll closed, when the numbers were;—Philips, 2,344; Thomson, 1,545; Loyd, 1,396; Hope, 1,136; and Cobbett, 965. The election of Philips was now obviously secured; but there did not seem the same certainty for Thomson, who was only 149 before Loyd; and it was believed that the supporters of Cobbett and Hope, who had been shamelessly splitting votes with each other—ultra-tories and ultra-radicals



making common cause—seeing they had no chance of success, would unite to put Loyd before Thomson; but on Friday Thomson kept gaining throughout the day, and at the close of the poll had obtained a majority of 237 over Loyd. The numbers then stood thus:—

Philips .....	2,923
Thomson .....	2,069
Loyd .....	1,832
Hope .....	1,560
Cobbett .....	1,305

Mr. Thomson, who had never offered himself as a candidate for Manchester—never even said that he would sit for Manchester if elected—was returned for Dover also. He chose to sit for the larger constituency. The honour of a double return—for South Lancashire and Wolverhampton—was conferred at another period on Mr. Villiers, and at another, the West Riding and Stockport, upon Mr. Cobden. Mr. Cobbett was peculiarly fortunate at Oldham; the majority of his constituents were “Cobbettites;” he stood in coalition with Mr. John Fielden, a Cobbettite, and with the additional influence which great wealth usually gives; his opponents were Mr. B. Heywood Bright, a mere whig, who had sought the place in all England the most unlikely to favour such political principles, and Mr. Burge, the Attorney-General for Jamaica, who strove to get into Parliament expressly to support the interests of the West India slave owners. A fifth candidate, Mr. George Stephens, offered himself only that he might have an opportunity of exposing the slave system and its advocate. At the close of the poll the numbers were:—Fielden, 675; Cobbett, 644; B. H. Bright, 153; Burge, 101; and Stephens, 3.

At Bury no tory offered himself, and the contest lay between Mr. Walker, a whig-radical, and Mr. Edmund Grundy, a radical, both of them inhabitants of the borough. The election was in favour of the former, who had 304

votes, while the latter had only 150. In the evening, the adherents of the unsuccessful candidate were so much excited, that in spite of the earnest exhortations of Mr. Grundy to preserve the peace, they proceeded to break the windows of some of their opponents, and the military were called in to prevent further violence, although probably nothing more serious would have occurred.

At Macclesfield the contest was entirely between local candidates, a result common when the constituency is so small as to be borne upon with effect in every part by local influence. On Macclesfield, containing not a sixth part of the number of inhabitants that Manchester had, had been bestowed as many seats as were conferred on Manchester. The candidates were Mr. Ryle, a banker, who wished to restore protection to the silk manufacture, which he said had been ruined by the free trade system; Mr. Brocklehurst, silk manufacturer and banker, a moderate reformer; and Mr. Grimsditch, attorney, a tory of the old school. The two bankers were elected.

At Blackburn also, the local influence was too strong to permit the election of a distinguished reformer and free-trader, but a noble effort was made to return Dr. Bowring, which would have been successful had the voters been more numerous or protected by the ballot. On behalf of the local candidates, although professed reformers, the base corruptions of the old system at elections were largely practised. Bowring said he would not give a cup of ale to secure him a seat, and the numbers who voted for him proved that nearly one half of the electors acted upon principle, however debased a portion of the other half might be. The numbers at the close of the poll were, Fielding, 376; Turner, 346; and Bowring, 334.

Wigan might be considered as a new borough, for, before the Reform Bill the right of voting had been confined to certain burgesses nominated by a self-elected corporation. Mr. Richard Potter had made a noble effort

in the previous year to restore the ancient household suffrage, and had thus established a claim of gratitude on the new constituency, in addition to twenty years' labour in the cause of reform. Along with him stood Mr. Thicknesse, a banker of Wigan, a reformer. Against him were Mr. Kearsley, an eccentric, and not very much cultivated man, a tory of the old school; and Mr. Whittle, editor of the *Manchester and Salford Advertiser*, a Cobbettite, who said he stood mainly because none of the other candidates would promise to vote against the tax on the "poor man's beverage." At the end of the first day's polling Kearsley resigned, and so did Whittle, who had obtained only thirteen votes. Some delay took place in making up the return, and during the absence of the mayor for that purpose, the multitude in front of the hustings, to the number of at least five thousand, swaying about alarmingly, like waves of the sea, I was requested to occupy their attention. I congratulated them on the peaceable manner in which a great constitutional right had been exercised, contrasting it with the drunkenness that used to prevail at former elections; Mr. Potter had been placed at the head of the poll, and he deserved to stand there, considering what he had done for the emancipation of the borough from its self-elected burgesses; Mr. Thicknesse came next, at only a short distance, and he deserved to stand so near, as he had voted faithfully for the Reform Bill; Mr. Kearsley was far behind, and it was right that he should, for he had voted against reform. The multitude was now stilled, and I went on to express the gratification that I, who had been present when measures were originated to emancipate the borough, felt at witnessing the triumph that had been achieved; the results of the Reform Bill ought to be cheap government, cheap food, and the removal of all those restrictions on trade which prevented the working man from receiving

the full reward for his labour; if these results did not follow the bill, the same noble spirit which caused it to pass, would cause its amendment. The mayor then appeared, and declared the state of the poll: Thicknesse, 302; Potter, 296; Kearsley, 175; Whittle, 12.

On a previous visit with Mr. Potter to Wigan, I had a short conversation with Mr. Stanley, now the Earl of Derby, and prime minister. At the end of 1830, after having taken office in the whig administration, he had been ousted from Preston because he had given a peremptory and emphatic "No" to the question if he would vote against the Corn Law. He was now on his way to offer himself as candidate for North Lancashire. He asked me who would be returned for Manchester. I said, "We shall send Mr. Poulett Thomson, partly as an expression of gratitude to ministers for the Reform Bill, and that he may tell his colleagues that we demand the repeal of the Corn Law as the first practical measure of relief to the people." "You will make a very good choice," he replied. I said, "And we shall send our townsman, Mr. Mark Philips, to show you that we want the adoption of the ballot, and the repeal of the Septennial Act, as additions to the Reform Bill." "It will be a good choice," he said, but he did not look as if he was altogether pleased with the information he had received.

At Bolton two reformers, Colonel Torrens, the author of an able work on the corn trade, and Mr. Ashton Yates, of Liverpool, would have been returned, but for the introduction of Mr. Eagle, a Cobbettite, who divided the reform interest. Mr. Bolling was the only tory candidate. Great tumult took place on the first day of the election, and the military were called in. On the second day Bolling shot ahead of Yates, and at the close of the poll the numbers were, Torrens, 626; Bolling, 499; Yates, 482; and Eagle, 107.

The result of the general election, although exhibiting



a great majority for ministers, was not such as to give unmingled satisfaction to those who critically examined the returns. Many men who had been tried in the balance were found wanting, but in the general adherence to reform principles, the consequence of success, it was difficult to ascertain how far the adhesion was on principle. When nearly all professed to be reformers, just as in the general election, twenty years later, all professed to be free-traders, the ordeal was after, rather than before, the appearance on the hustings. It became a subject of interesting speculation whether the House of Commons would be led by the Whig ministers, or originate and press forward practical measures on which the ministry might be unwilling to hazard place and power. My comments on the position of affairs were, I believe, fairly representative of the prevailing opinion:—

“The elections have been exceedingly favourable to ministers; the electors having, with few exceptions, rejected alike those candidates who would have opposed them on popular measures, and those who would have urged them onwards with a too hasty zeal. The country has thus imposed upon them a weighty responsibility. By returning members who will support them, it has given them the power to advance in every practicable reform, and by rejecting their opponents it has taken away from them every shadow of excuse for tardiness of movement in effecting public good. They may encounter obstacles from the throne, which is surrounded by those to whom a very rigid economy will be anything but acceptable; they may have opposed to them the unreasoning obstinacy of the House of Lords, where there is, as yet, very little of that enlightenment which has spread amongst the people; and they may be embarrassed by the entanglement of legacies from their tory predecessors in office; but they have got rid of the nominees of borough-owners, including numerous members sent to the House of Commons expressly to support the Bank monopoly, the East India monopoly, and the atrocities of the West India slave system, and of a considerable number of those whose business it was to support the corn-growers’ monopoly. They have, in short, obtained a clear stage, and the country is disposed to see them have fair play; and if, under such favourable circumstances, and without the excuse that they are either opposed with factious pertinacity, or pushed on with imprudent

ardour, they fail to effect great public good, the people will be exceedingly apt to suspect the want of inclination.

"We, however, relying on their honesty of intention, trust they will not disappoint the public expectation. But they must not flatter themselves that the rejection of ultra-tories on the one hand, and of ultra-radicals on the other, implies a belief on the part of the people that the administration occupies exactly the just medium between the two extremes, or that the great measure of reform, which, supported as they have been by the public voice, they have happily effected, is complete and perfect. The compliment has been paid them, and deservedly paid them, on account of their past services, of returning persons in office, and members pledged to serve them; but a further compliment has been paid them by the electors, in believing that the representatives most likely to be acceptable to them are those who will urge them onwards, rather than wait for their impulse.

"The county constituencies have not shown themselves so favourable to progressive reform as the constituencies of the boroughs, having generally sent members who, like a portion of the administration, regard the Reform Bill as a final measure. But public opinion has gained great force, and we doubt not that many of the administration, though now indifferent to the Ballot and the Septennial Act, will, ere long, accord to the almost universal will of the people. In the meantime it is curious to observe how those tories, who are pleased to call themselves reformers, let forth the secret of their terror of a too rapid march of improvement. The *Guardian* of last Saturday says:—'We are convinced that ministers will be stronger in the new parliament, to do *what is right*, than in former parliaments (except for short periods, and under peculiar circumstances,) previous ministers have ever been to do what was wrong. However, it is desirable that there should at all times be a respectable and talented opposition. Public measures of an important character require to be well considered in every variety of aspect; and this can in no way be so well done as by engaging in the discussions on their merits persons of different temperaments, education, principles, and modes of thinking. Whilst, therefore, we rejoice in the probable exclusion from St. Stephen's Chapel of some parliamentary mountebanks and mere factious oppositionists, we are glad to see that there is no doubt of the presence in the House of Commons of a number of the most respectable and able opponents of the ministry. They will not be in force to stop the wheels of improvement; but, like the governor of the steam-engine, they may prevent a dangerous rapidity of motion.' Glad! glad that the onward march of improvement is to be retarded by the opposing force of the enemies of reform! Are there not checks enough provided by the constitution, without sending more into that house

which ought purely to represent the people? Is there not the King, surrounded as he is by influences unfavourable to too great an extension of popular privilege? Are there not the Lords, with all their aristocratic horror of popular encroachment? Are not these sufficient guarantees against a 'dangerous rapidity of motion' without clapping the drag-chain of tory obstinacy upon the movements of the Commons? Oh! what confusion reigns in the heads of these men of checks and balances!"

The King's speech on the opening of parliament did not contain any allusion to an improved commercial policy. Again, I believe, I expressed the opinions of a considerable portion of the community when I said: — "His Majesty congratulates the houses that, with very few exceptions, the public peace has been preserved, and tells them it will be their 'grateful duty'—to do what? To rescue the people from that depth of suffering which they have borne in a manner entitling them to the gratitude of the legislature? No! But 'to promote habits of industry and good order amongst the labouring classes of the community.' To promote industry amongst the hardest working community on the face of the earth! To promote 'good order' amongst those for whose preservation of the public peace his Majesty thinks the lords and commons ought to be grateful! Why was there not an acknowledgment that the greater part of the community is suffering under the load of grievous taxation, and some hope held out of an alleviation of the public burthens? Why was there no recommendation to consider how the community was operated upon by the corn-laws, when every one confesses that the system, abandoned by the most zealous of its supporters, stands almost exploded, and that a change must be made, now that the commercial communities of this country have representatives in the councils of the nation? We have had the satisfaction of seeing that Lord Althorp, in reply to a question from Mr. T. Fowell Buxton, has expressed his confidence that he shall be able to propose a measure on the subject of negro slavery, which

shall at once be safe and satisfactory. Let us hope that other just and necessary measures will be proposed, though not mentioned in the speech. We are willing to believe that, if there be any backwardness on the part of ministers to originate broad and extensive reforms, it arises from their fears of obstruction in the House of Lords. If this be the case, it is the duty of the people to support them, not only in carrying such beneficial measures as they may introduce, but, by the demand for further relief, to remove from them the charge of attempting more than the people desire to obtain. Let them be strengthened against the grasping landowners by petitions for the repeal of the Corn Laws. Let them be told that we, in the manufacturing districts, are quite willing to give such encouragement to the agricultural interests as may be effected by taking the duty off malt. Let them have a reason for abolishing all useless places and unmerited pensions, by the demand for the repeal of the Assessed Taxes. Let them be enabled to effect a thorough Church reform, by a contradiction of the Duke of Wellington's assertion that the people of England do not complain of tithes. Let them silence other conservatives who say that reform has already been too extensive, by petitioning for the ballot and for short parliaments. *Let no man be afraid of embarrassing the ministry by such demands.* If honestly determined to introduce cheap and good government, *it will be strengthened rather than weakened* by an universal call for those practical reforms which the country expects to follow the measure that they have had the merit of originating, and, aided by the people, of carrying, in spite of borough-mongering and aristocratical influence."

It will be seen that the cry of "Do not embarrass the ministry" had been already raised. It was found exceedingly effective in repressing the impatience of those who had thought that the Reform Bill was but an instrument for the attainment of other necessary reforms. Under the



new system of representation, ministers had acknowledged their obligations to men possessing popular influence, and the acknowledgment had induced many to believe that their advice would be gladly received and acted upon. The almost invariable reply was that the suggestions were good, very good, and would be taken into consideration at the first favourable opportunity, but that, under the present peculiar circumstances, it would be imprudent and dangerous to press the measures recommended; it would embarrass ministers, anxious to promote, at the right time, every well-considered practicable reform; and, so, those leading men became quiet, waiting, patiently or impatiently, for the right time, until ministers, firmly fixed in their seats, could go boldly onward. When the instrument was obtained, there was a reluctance to use it immediately, as if the axe would cut more effectively after it had rusted. When a protest against the continuance of destructive commercial policy was urged, the reply usually was: "We have sent free-trade representatives—that is our protest."

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE NEW HOUSE OF COMMONS.

The new House of Commons was soon to be tested as to the Corn Law. On the 17th of May, Mr. Whitmore moved a declaration to the effect, that instead of producing equality of prices, and thereby a permanent good, it had produced a contrary effect, and tended injuriously to cramp trade. Mr. Hume, amid much outcry, denied that any peculiar burthen fell on trade. Mr. Feargus O'Connor, Mr. G. Heathcote, and others, resisted the motion, and Lord Althorp, Chancellor of the Exchequer and leader in the Commons, took the same side, on the ground that then to agitate the question, when they would not have an opportunity of setting it at rest, owing to the quantity of other business before Parliament, would be the most unwise thing they could do ; and so the question was settled for that session. Jeremy Bentham, who had gone to his grave after all opposition to the Reform Bill had been removed, rejoicing in his last days that the freedom of trade which he had always advocated, was about to be triumphant, could scarcely have anticipated that the "not-the-time" plea would so soon have been used by the reform ministers. "Importance of the business," he had said in his *Book of Fallacies*, "extreme difficulty of the business—danger of innovation—need of caution and circumspection—impossibility of foreseeing all consequences

—every thing should be gradual—one thing at a time—this is not the time—great occupation at present—wait for more leisure;—such is the prattle which the man in office, who, understanding nothing, understands that he must have something to say on every subject, shouts out among his auditors as a succedaneum of thought.”

Parliament was prorogued in August. The country showed little disposition to urge ministers forwards. The “not-the-time” plea was admitted; when the right time for movement should come, ministers would, no doubt, avail themselves of it. Believing that the right time would come sooner if the people should exhibit some impatience, I counselled the formation of associations:—“If any one who had access to such of his Majesty’s ministers as are supposed to be favourable to the abolition of the bread-tax—to Mr. Poulett Thomson for instance—were to ask him, ‘Why don’t you repeal the Corn Laws, which you acknowledge to be bad in principle and oppressive in operation, the answer would probably be: ‘What can we do? . We have the landed interest, bound together as one man, to oppose the opening of the trade in corn, while the manufacturing communities utter not one word of complaint against the monopoly. It is impossible to contend with the one interest without the aid of the other. Now, if the individual who hears this, or can suppose that such might be said, does not do all in his power to procure that expression of public opinion which is necessary to effect that change, *he*, at least, has no reason to complain that he is obliged to sell his calicos cheap and his bread dear. \* \* \* \* There ought to be a systematic opposition to the continuance of the bread tax. Let half-a-dozen persons in each of the surrounding towns meet together, and resolve to agitate the question in public meetings. The matter needs only a beginning. When once such little committees are formed, communication may be opened with other towns, and the opposition will

then assume a regular form, and proceed with all the energy of union." Mr. William Weir, the editor of the *Glasgow Argus*, was advising a similar course. He was reprinting in his paper an excellent pamphlet, by Mr. Thomas Crewdson, of Manchester, and at the conclusion of a commentary upon the facts therein stated, he said :— " We this day commence a system of agitation against the iniquitous Corn Laws, which we solemnly pledge ourselves shall terminate only with their abolition." He faithfully redeemed his pledge ; and I may be permitted to say, that I faithfully redeemed a similar pledge, made in 1828 ; but five years more were still to elapse before any half-dozen of persons set the agitation effectively at work. There was a good harvest in 1834, and a better in 1835, and there was the resulting prosperity of 1836 to make the people patient under the infliction ; and there was, during all those years, a pretty general belief that ministers, " at the right time," would be faithful to their free-trade professions. Journalists, under these circumstances, could do little to excite activity—all that they could hope for was, that the seed which they had been sowing would appear after a time.

Manchester did a little, listlessly. On January 29th, 1834, a meeting of merchants and manufacturers, called by circular, was held in the Exchange Committee Room, to consider how the cause of Corn-Law repeal was to be forwarded ; and good speeches were made by Mr. R. H. Greg (afterwards member for the borough), Mr. R. Potter, M.P., Mr. Mark Philips, M.P., Mr. John Shuttleworth, Mr. J. B. Smith (afterwards M.P.), Mr. J. Brotherton, M.P., and Mr. J. C. Dyer, chairman of Mr. Thomson's committee, but nothing came of it. The intention of forming any association was carefully disclaimed. A committee was appointed, from which the editors of newspapers were excluded, in order to avoid the appearance of a political agitation, and the committee did nothing, per-

haps could do nothing. The sun was shining, and there was never to be a rainy day again.

The free-trade members in the Commons had not been strengthened by the country, and therefore fought under great disadvantage. Mr. Hume, with the resolution to do right whatever support he might have, had given notice, that, on the 6th of March, he would move for a committee, with the view of substituting a fixed duty on corn, in lieu of the fluctuating scale. The landowners mustered in great force to oppose it. Sir James Graham declared his firm conviction to be, that whenever such a scheme as that proposed should take place, it would not be the destruction of one particular class in the state, but of the state itself. Mr. Feargus O'Connor said that to admit corn duty free, would be the ruin of Ireland. Lord Morpeth (now the Earl of Carlisle), the first of after converts of his class, supported the motion, as did Lord Howick (now Earl Grey), and some of his relatives. Lord Althorp pleaded that there was no present exigency — agriculture was depressed and manufactures were prosperous, and the change proposed could not improve the condition of the latter. Mr. Poulett Thomson, notwithstanding his position in the ministry, made a bold and masterly speech in favour of the motion, in which he most unmercifully demolished the arguments of Sir James Graham. He advised the house to legislate *then*, when they could do so with calmness, deliberation, and wisdom. "Let them wait," he said, "until one of those fluctuations should, under Providence, occur, through a failure of the harvest in France, and then a change of the Corn Laws would be called for in much less respectful language than he should ever wish to hear addressed to that house." The prophetic warning was disregarded. The monopolists had mustered for the occasion, and the cabinet took them under its protecting wing. Amongst the majority were almost all the Irish members, who, by refusing to sanction a poor law, and



permitting their own countrymen to die of starvation, now gave a fresh instance of their heartless selfishness, by voting that Englishmen should not have cheap bread, because Irish landowners had corn to sell. On division, the numbers were :—For the motion, 155 ; against it, 313.

If the merchants and manufacturers placed too much reliance on parliamentary action without outward pressure, the working classes misdirected their aim. They were wasting their energies in the formation of trades' unions, and in obviously hopeless contests with their employers—alike sufferers by impolitic restrictions on trade. Ebenezer Elliott, in an address to the people of England, published in *Tait's Magazine*, called on those classes to awaken from their slumbers, and told them :—"The Corn Laws have placed you on the verge of a volcano. If your rivals establish a system of free trade before you, you are gone for ever as a manufacturing people, and nothing will then remain for you but potatoes ; nothing for your oppressors but potatoes and salt." The hard-smiting writer thus concluded his appeal :—"How many more sessions of your reform Parliament can you afford to throw away ? Think not, then, of his Majesty's renegade ministers. False to themselves, can they be true to you ? Trust them ? What ! have they not told you that your trade was never more flourishing than at present ? Yes, there is one branch of your trade which does indeed flourish ; I mean the manufacture of customers into rivals ! Yes, and if the Corn Laws continue but a little longer, the trade of your rivals—planted, nurtured, and matured by the madness of the landed supporters of a suicidal administration—will continue to flourish and blossom, and bear fruit, over the grave of British prosperity ! Haste, then, and destroy these deadly Corn Laws, ere they subvert the empire. Let every trade, from every town, one by one, and again, and again, send petitions to Parliament. Let brave and enlightened Glasgow speak again to timid and

besotted Liverpool. Let awakened Liverpool shout to cowardly and goose-ridden Manchester; Manchester to London,—and all together to England and the world. We shall then have an union, not in name only, but in reality,—an union that will have, and do the right, and nothing but the right. Repudiate at once, and for ever, the idea of a fixed duty. Every shilling per quarter would be a direct tax of four millions sterling, per annum, on the productive classes of Englishmen. Treat not, then, for graduated iniquity; put not in the banns for a new marriage of reptile-spawning fraud and time; but with the word Restitution, pronounced in thunder, startle your oppressors from their hideous dream of injustice and ruin made permanent."

The call was unheeded; trade was moderately prosperous, employment easy to be had, and provisions at a moderate price; and so the year 1834 drifted on quietly, men thinking it would be time enough to complain of their liability to famine when the famine came. In the mean time, King William, if we are to believe with Mr. Roebuck that he was adverse to the reform which had been effected, and fearful that more might follow, was watching his opportunity to rid himself of the whig ministry. In November Lord Melbourne was dismissed, and the Duke of Wellington was installed as sole minister, until Sir Robert Peel should arrive from Italy to form a new reform-resisting administration. At the close of the year Parliament was dissolved, and the country, so far as it was represented, had to choose whether it would support men who might be considered as progressive, though with rather too much caution, or permit the accession to power of those who, if they did not take backward steps, would determinedly resist all onward movement. At the general election, Manchester again returned Mr. Thomson and Mr. Philips, not unopposed, but opposed by a feeble candidate supported by a feeble party,

notwithstanding the accession of its friends to office ; and by this return made another emphatic declaration in favour of the principles of free trade. The election, however, of Mr. Thomson for the largest manufacturing constituency of the kingdom, placed him in a position to occupy, beneficially to the public, the time between the death of Huskisson and the advent of Cobden. In the memoir of his life, his brother, Mr. Poulett Scrope, says :—" Many valuable alterations were effected by Mr. Thomson in the customs' duties. Besides the entire abolition of the duty on hemp, an absurd and mischievous burthen on all British shipping, a great reduction was made in the duties on dye stuffs used in our manufactures, and on medicines consumed largely by the poor. He likewise introduced, for the first time, a methodical and rational classification of all the customs duties retained in our tariff. At a later period he carried out still further this simplification of the duties on import, and their reduction, where the revenue would admit of it. The attention of fiscal reformers had hitherto been directed, principally, if not wholly, to a few of the larger articles, such as sugar, coffee, timber, wool, and cotton. But Mr. Thomson saw clearly, that, while considerations of revenue or of party policy might forbid the sound principles of finance being at once applied to these, it was yet in the power of government to afford extensive and very sensible relief, both to a variety of branches of native industry, and to the consumer at large, by reduction of the heavy duties on some hundreds of small, and apparently insignificant articles, which brought in little to the revenue, while the high duties on them were a grievous obstacle to their use in the arts or manufacture, and their direct consumption. \* \* \* \* The records of the Board of Trade, and the evidence of the able officers permanently employed there, such as Mr. Macgregor and the late Mr. Deacon Hume, attest that the more recent alterations of the Tariff effected by Sir Robert

Peel and Mr. Gladstone, are, to a great extent, but the realization of projects and the carrying out of principles laid down by Mr. Thomson during his official connection with that board, as *desiderata* to be secured, whenever the government had the power to do so."

The Wellington-Peel administration were soon compelled to resign office, and in the succeeding government, Mr. Thomson, again returned for Manchester, had the presidentship of the Board of Trade, with a seat in the cabinet, stipulating that, in his more influential position, he should still, notwithstanding the old rule of compromise, have liberty to raise his voice and record his vote against the heaviest and most oppressive of all the monopolies to which he was opposed. It was something that Manchester compelled this concession from colleagues far behind him in the comprehension of a principle and boldness in giving it expression—something that Manchester, from the period of its enfranchisement to the repeal of the corn-law, always sent representatives to protest against the landowners' monopoly.

The landlords, in 1834, were "distressed" with the abundance, as they had been with the abundance of 1822. I have, elsewhere,\* described the comfort of the people at the former period; and there may be use, at the present time, when, while I write, an administration is in office, pledged to protection by all its antecedents, in repeating the description; for the memory is more retentive of inflictions than of their occasional cessation, and history is more a record of crime and suffering than of periods of peace and plenty. The sword and the spear furnish more stirring descriptions than the ploughshare and the pruning hook. The man who storms and fires a city is immortalised by the historian's pen; he who enables a nation to earn its food by honest labour, dies

\* Historical Sketches of Manchester.

comparatively unnoticed, and to posterity comparatively unknown. How briefly are periods of peace passed over in our oldest and most authentic record! After the deliverance of Israel from a foreign yoke, effected under the direction of Deborah, the prophetess, we read: "And the land had rest forty years;" and that Jair "judged Israel twenty-and-two years." We hear no more of them; they judged rightly: *the people were at rest*—no history of misdoings was needed. The history of the eighty-five years of tranquillity, of peace, and, as we may presume, of plenty, is told in three lines. Would that the history of mankind were capable of such brief but precious record! In our little narrow history-ground of Manchester, we find, now and then, some such refreshing resting-places, some such green in the thirsty waste. In thirty years of war and scarcity, hunger and nakedness, to three-fourths of the community, are three or four years of peace and plenty nothing to the afflicted millions? In so long a period of constantly deepening gloom, was a brief gleam of general sunshine nothing? History was silent, but *the people were fed*. And they thought also, those briefly well-fed multitudes, calmly, but not less deeply, and their inquiry was: "WHY SHOULD IT NOT ALWAYS BE THUS?" Mr. Wheeler, in his "History of Manchester," makes a great leap from Hunt's trial at York, in 1820, to the bank failures at the end of 1825, and the loom breakings and factory burnings of 1826. There lay a happy period some time between. One could then draw the curtains, and wheel round the sofa nearer to the cheerful fire, and the more enjoy the social meal, from the conviction that there was comfort also in the cottage, and no wailings in the street. It was worth something on the Saturday night, to see the working man's wife need her husband's help to carry home *the heavy basket*, filled with bread and beef, and flour and suet. But then came the reflection that the Corn Law was unrepealed, and that a single bad harvest might mar all this



comfort. Much outcry came from the landowners at the cheapness of provisions, as if heaven-sent plenty was a curse. The Saturday's basket of the operative was well filled, but the landlord's rents were not well paid. What cared the latter about the well-filled baskets, when their coffers wanted the supply which hitherto had been wrung out from the people by war prices? The loyalists of 1793 were not more horror-struck at the murder of Marie Antoinette than the soilowners of 1822 were at the fall of wheat to 40s. a quarter. They had expected that their law of 1815 would keep up the price to 80s. ; for a profuse issue of paper money, accompanying scanty harvests, had long kept up prices. In 1816, 1817, and 1818, deficient harvests occurred—that of the former being calculated as below the average to a greater extent than in any year since the period at the close of the previous century, and prices rose in consequence so as to exceed the rate at which foreign corn might be admitted, and 2,600,000 qrs. of wheat were imported in 1817 and 1818. The harvest of 1820 was supposed to be one-fourth beyond the average ; that of 1821 was large, but of inferior quality ; and that of 1822 was again beyond the average, and was unusually early. In the week ending the 24th of December, 1822, the average prices were : — Wheat, 38s. 8d. ; barley, 29s. 4d. ; oats, 18s. 9d. ; rye, 23s. 6d. ; beans, 28s. 10d. ; peas, 28s. 4d. ; being 41s. 4d., 10s. 8d., 8s. 3d., 29s. 6d., 24s. 2d., 23s. 8d., lower than the scale which had been fixed upon, ostensibly for the protection of the farmer, but really for the protection of the landowner. The farmers did indeed now suffer ; for, during peace, and with a currency much enhanced in value, they were called upon to pay the rents which they had paid when they had war prices and a greatly depreciated currency. Many were the proposals made to relieve this “ agricultural distress,” and Parliament resolved to alleviate the “ pressure upon the distressed landowners,” and that £1,000,000 should be ad-

vanced to them, in exchequer bills, when the average price of wheat was under sixty shillings. Great efforts were made to make the country believe that the agricultural labourers were in a most wretched condition in consequence of the low prices of corn; but it began then to be understood that the wages of farm labour never rose in proportion to the rise in the price of farm produce, and that, although they had fallen in 1822, the *recipients were more than compensated by the low price of food*. In the olden time abundant harvests were regarded as the greatest of blessings. It was a special promise, often repeated, that the Israelites should have plentiful harvests if they obeyed the commandments of God. The framers of the English Prayer Book directed the people to supplicate for plenty and cheapness. It was reserved for the enlightened nineteenth century to regard them as deeply to be deplored evils. In 1822, a million of money was lent to enable the growers of corn to keep it out of the market till its price should rise; to withhold it till the people should begin to curse. The consumers said little about the loan or the law. It was well with them *then*, and they did not look to the future. Merchants and manufacturers, rejoicing that Hunt and his followers had been put down, were neither disposed to become agitators themselves, nor to sanction agitation by others. They suffered for their regardlessness of consequences. The real prosperity of 1822-23, was followed by the reckless speculation of 1824-5, and that was followed by the panic of 1826, and by that severe depression of trade, and that depth of discontent which made the Reform Bill a measure absolutely necessary for the conservation of the public peace.

On the return of the whigs to office, in the spring of 1835, they found the agricultural members, for whom a preponderance in the house, according to Lord John Russell's confession, had been provided in the distribution of seats under the Reform Bill, again complaining of the

“distress” occasioned by the plentiful harvest, and demanding more protection. It was an opportune complaint, and an opportune demand. The ministry could again plead the imprudence of embarrassing them, after they had encountered the risk of utter exclusion from office, and could ask the impatient of monopoly how they could remove protection in the face of so loud a demand for its increase. It was quite enough for the period that a motion of the Marquis of Chandos, for a repeal of the taxes that bore upon agriculture, was negatived. It was not the right time to do more, for there was a promise in the appearance of the crops, that there would be an increase to the abundance, and consequently greater landlord complaint, and greater prosperity to commerce and manufactures.

There was a glorious harvest in 1835. In the September of that year, when on a visit to Mr. Childs, at Bungay, in Suffolk, I saw a barn floor covered with the finest wheat, which Mr. Feltham, the grower, told us could not at that time bring more than 4s. 6d. a bushel. He said he would keep it till the spring, when he hoped to get 5s. for it. How did the agricultural labourer fare? I recollected a saying of an old countrywoman in Scotland, when somebody was arguing that when the farmers got good prices the labourers were well off, “Na, na! Ye’ll no persuade me that when there’s plenty o’ meal puir folks will get less than when it is scarce.” In 1835, the farm labourers had more wholesome food at their command than they had ever had during my lifetime. In Manchester I had the gratification of again seeing the working man, on a Saturday night, helping his wife to carry home the *heavy basket*. There was no need for statistical tables, to show that there was a great additional consumption of necessities and comforts. The fact spoke out in the manifest improvement in the appearance of the multitudes, now well dressed, and presenting undeniable proofs that they

were well fed. I asked my foreman how the compositors in my office, whose wages had been the same sum weekly for a quarter of a century, were expending what they saved from the low price of food, and he said it was astonishing to see how much they were laying out on good clothes and good furniture, besides what they were laying past for future provision. And now again came the question from some: "*Why should it not always be thus?*" If a good harvest in England was productive of all this comfort, why should not the people of England have the advantage of a good harvest anywhere else? But then again came the question from others: "Why should we agitate for cheap food when wheat is only four shillings and sixpence a bushel?"

There were, however, some amongst those who were asking, "Why should it not always be thus?" who were also preparing to put the question emphatically to the country at large. In 1835 there had been sent to me, for publication in my paper, some admirably written letters. They contained no internal evidence to guide me in guessing as to who might be the writer, and I concluded that there was some new man amongst us, who, if he held a station that would enable him to take a part in public affairs, would exert a widely beneficial influence amongst us. He might be some young man in a warehouse who had thought deeply on political economy, and its practical application in our commercial policy, who might not be soon in a position to come before the public as an influential teacher; but we had, I had no doubt, somewhere amongst us, perhaps sitting solitary after his day's work in some obscure apartment, like Adam Smith in his quiet closet at Kirkcaldy, one, inwardly and quietly conscious of his power, but patiently biding his time, to popularize the doctrines sent forth in the "*Wealth of Nations*," and to make the multitude think as the philosopher had thought, and to act upon their convictions. I



told many that a new man had come, and the question was often put amongst my friends: "Who is he?" It is some satisfaction to me now, writing seventeen years after that period, that I had anticipated the deliberate verdict of the nation. In the course of that year, a pamphlet, published by Ridgeway, under the title "England, Ireland, and America," was put into my hand by a friend, inscribed "from the author," and I instantly recognized the hand writing of my unknown, much by me desired to be known, correspondent; and I was greatly gratified when I learned that Mr. Cobden, the author of the pamphlet, desired to meet me at my friend's house. I went with something of the same kind of feelings which I had experienced when I first, four years' before, went to visit Jeremy Bentham, the father of the practical free traders; nor was I disappointed, except in one respect. I found a man who could enlighten by his knowledge, counsel by his prudence, and conciliate by his temper and manners; and who, if he found his way into the House of Commons, would secure its respectful attention; but I had been an actor amongst men who, from 1812 to 1832, had fought in the rough battle for parliamentary reform, and I missed, in the unassuming gentleman before me, not the energy, but the apparent hardihood and dash which I had, forgetting the change of times, believed to be requisites to the success of a popular leader. In after years, and after having attained great platform popularity, he had been elected a member of parliament, and when men sneered and said he would soon find his level there, as other mob orators had done, I ventured to say that he would be in his proper vocation there, and that his level would be amongst the first men in the house.

Mr. Cobden, before his pamphlet appeared, was little known but as a calico printer, of good taste and good business ability, beginning to produce articles of a superior quality, competing with the best London prints. His



pamphlet, in which the doctrine of free trade and non-intervention in the affairs of other states were advocated with great ability, was reprinted in a cheap form by William Tait, and circulated in tens of thousands. But a sterner teacher than Richard Cobden was needed. The seed sown by him was not scattered to the winds, but it produced no immediately visible fruit. During the abundance few thought of the probably soon following scarcity. Like the foolish rich man in Scripture, men, knowing that their garners were full, were disposed to give ease to their souls, and to eat, drink, and be merry. A prophet was amongst them, but they regarded him not, so far as action went. His able pamphlet was read, however, as Colonel Thompson's "Anti-Corn Law Catechism" (of which, when first published, I had distributed 4,000 copies along with my newspaper) had been; and, during the abundance which followed the plentiful harvest of 1835, the attentive perusal of the Colonel's Catechism, and Cobden's "England, Ireland, and America," and his subsequent "Russophobia," and the frequent articles in the *Westminster Review* and *Tait's Magazine*, and in some of the newspapers, did much to prepare men's minds for action when the sterner teacher came. From the time that Cobden made his public appearance in print in the year 1835, I did not hesitate publicly to declare my strong conviction that any Lancashire borough would do itself honour by returning him as its representative to parliament. That attainable honour Lancashire lost.

## CHAPTER IV.

### AN ANTI-CORN-LAW ASSOCIATION.

A considerable rise in the price of corn after the harvest of 1836, a pressure upon the money market, and the failure of some banks, gave indication that the prosperity which had for some time been enjoyed was not to be of much longer continuance. Towards the end of the year an Anti-Corn-Law Association was formed in London, with the following gentlemen for its committee:—

John Blackburne, M.P.,  
Joseph Brotherton, M.P.,  
J. S. Buckingham, M.P.,  
William Clay, M.P.,  
P. Chalmers, M.P.,  
T. S. Duncombe, M.P.,  
H. Elphinstone, M.P.,  
William Ewart, M.P.,  
George Grote, M.P.,  
D. W. Harvey, M.P.,  
Benjamin Hawes, M.P.,  
Joseph Hume, M.P.,  
J. P. Leader, M.P.,  
Sir W. Molesworth, M.P.,  
James Pattison, M.P.,  
Richard Potter, M.P.,  
J. A. Roebuck, M.P.,  
Joshua Scholefield, M.P.,  
Colonel Thompson, M.P.,  
C. A. Talk, M.P.,  
Thomas Wakley, M.P.,

Robert Wallace, M.P.,  
Dr. J. Wyatt Crane,  
John Crawford,  
Ebenezer Elliott, Sheffield,  
Thomas Falkoner,  
E. W. Field,  
Edmund Fraser,  
Alexander Galloway,  
Thomas F. Gibson,  
Dr. J. M. Gully,  
G. H. Heppel,  
William Howitt, Nottingham,  
W. Ibbotson, Endcliffe Hall,  
J. W. Liggins,  
Captain M'Arthur Law,  
John Marshall, Leeds,  
Elias Moss, Liverpool,  
Robert Nicol, Leeds,  
Francis Place,  
Archibald Prentice, Manchester.  
W. G. Prescott,

George Charwood,  
 John Anderson,  
 J. W. Anderson,  
 W. H. Ashurst,  
 Samuel Bailey, Sheffield,  
 Augustus Beaumont,  
 William Bitton, Portsmouth,  
 Dr. J. R. Black,  
 Laman Blanchard,  
 J. E. Body,  
 John Bridgeford, Sheffield,  
 George Brown,  
 Richard Burnett,  
 W. Byers, Devonport,  
 Thomas Campbell, L.L.D.,  
 H. S. Chapman,

Thomas Prout,  
 Samuel Revans,  
 W. D. Saull,  
 Samuel Simes, Brighton,  
 Colonel Leicester Stanhope,  
 Major H. C. Smith,  
 J. L. Stevens,  
 William Tait, Edinburgh,  
 Dr. John Taylor, Glasgow,  
 John Travers,  
 H. Waymouth,  
 William Weir, Glasgow,  
 R. G. Welford,  
 John Wilson,  
 Charles Wood,  
 John Ashton Yates.

There were on this committee several gentlemen, who, with Colonel Thompson, in the after and more efficient movement, did good service to the cause of free trade; but the body was not representative; it had not the support of a numerous constituency; and there was no arrangement for united action. Little else, therefore, came of it than to keep notice directed to the subject of the Corn Law, which, in two years more, with the sterner teacher in its train, was to force itself upon the attention of the sufferers; and to bring new men, with better organization, into the field of contest. That year, 1836, was not to expire, however, without indication of approaching adversity. Real prosperity led to the hope of continued prosperity, and that to undue speculation. In my newspaper, on the last day in the year, but not for the first time during the year, I gave the following warning to my readers:—

“Let us consider how joint-stock banks arise. We shall suppose that in some great commercial town the private bankers have derived princely incomes from their business. A number of wealthy capitalists begin to think that they might as well have a share in the profits of their own money changes. They form a company, prosper, pay handsome dividends, and their shares advance to a premium. Another

Class of capitalists come into the field to do *their* own banking business. They also prosper; they also pay a handsome dividend; and their shares also bring a premium. All this may be in the legitimate course of business, and no more than the increase of commercial transactions may warrant and require.

“But it may be that a crowd of persons, hearing of fortunes being speedily made by the purchase of bank shares, rush into the field. Half-a-dozen new joint-stock banks are projected. The shares are bought up with avidity. These shares soon bring a considerable premium, and thousands of persons rejoice at having a new source of profit opened to them. But now commences the mischief.

“Let us consider, first, how this competition will affect the general trade of the district. Each of the six new establishments is striving to obtain business; and as it is easy to issue paper which costs nothing, extraordinary temptations are held out in the way of discounts and advances. The man who with difficulty can have his bills cashed at one of the old establishments is glad to carry it where not only they are all taken without scruple, but a few thousand pounds of advance may be easily had. A seeming prosperity is created. Every man so favoured extends his own business, or enters into new speculations. It is high noon in a summer’s day, and the dark nights and the winter’s frosts are things that have been.

“The end of all this is best illustrated by a supposition case of the career of some of these prosperity-creating establishments. If, in a large town, there are numbers of persons willing to accept of the proffered accommodation, it may be supposed that there are numbers also in the surrounding smaller towns who will be equally disposed to accept a share in the abundance. A score or two of branches are established, and at all of them the same liberality prevails. The shareholders rejoice in doing a large business, looking complacently at the increased marketable value of their shares; and the persons who have opened accounts rejoice also, that all manner of promises to pay are immediately convertible into the notes of the bank. Of course it cannot be supposed that the directors, who have liberally diffused happiness to all around them, will deny themselves all participation in the universal joy. They see no necessity for a self-denying ordinance. They are, therefore, in no haste to pay up instalments on their own shares, money being abundant enough already; and as it would be an insult to the bank to suppose that its own directors are not worthy of all credit, they liberally discount the bills received in the course of trading in their own individual businesses, and freely draw upon the bank for assistance in their own individual speculations.

“We have supposed a case which may have no parallel in the present day; but it is not without an example. The Ayr Bank, which failed before Adam Smith published his ‘Wealth of Nations,’ gave an amazing stimulus to the industry of the county of Ayr. The landowner who subscribed £1,000 to the capital of the bank, drew out the same sum in its notes, and five times as much as an advance to his account. Houses were built, plantations made, farms improved, mosses drained, and roads made. The shareholders were like the shepherd boy in the Arcadia. They all piped as though they never should grow old. ‘This is a rare life—if it would but last,’ said John Knox to the silken-attired, gay, laughing, beautiful ladies of Queen Mary’s Court. It was a rare life to the Ayrshire landowners—but it did not last. People began to think that a bank whose shareholders had drawn out a great deal more than they had ever paid in, was not very trustworthy. The holders of notes presented them for payment. Down came the bank, having its foundation upon sand, and great was the fall thereof.

“We trust that experience here will not be purchased at so great a price. Enough has already occurred to give rise to a very salutary caution. It has been found that fortunes are not so easily made by the purchases of bank shares as was imagined. Those who have bought at £6 premium and sold at £5. 10s. discount, will hereafter be more careful to look at the character of the directors for knowledge and caution than at the price of shares in the market; actual proprietors, losing one-half of what they supposed they had safely invested, will eschew such further adventures; and those who have received advances, and have had suddenly to repay them, at the risk of total ruin, will hereafter choose rather to plod on in the slow but sure routine of their ordinary business, than venture into wider speculation on the faith of credit at an ill-managed bank.”

The following extracts from the *Manchester Times* may serve to show the unhealthy state of trade in 1837, after a deficient harvest with the continuance of a restricted commercial policy;—JANUARY 14th. “The duty on cotton is certainly a very absurd tax, and we are glad to see that a meeting is to be held, to take into consideration the propriety of petitioning for its repeal. There is, however, a tax infinitely more oppressive to our trade—the tax on corn; which not only raises the price here, but shuts us out from markets abroad for the sale of our goods. Why the members of the Chamber of Commerce, with whom



the requisition originates, should be so energetic for the abolition of the smaller tax, whilst they never make a movement against the greater, is beyond our comprehension."—MARCH 11. "There was a great scarcity of money in Liverpool and Manchester on Monday, but it does not appear to have led to any stoppages."—MARCH 18. "A few weeks ago, in treating of the pressure on the money market, we ventured to express our opinion, at variance with that of our contemporaries, that the crisis had not come. Our views have been strongly confirmed. Large issues by the Bank of England to meet the emergency of heavy payments on the 4th have indeed averted the evil day; but the exhibition of a strong stimulus after inebriation is not always the way to restore health."—APRIL 8. After notices of heavy failures in London, Manchester, Liverpool, and Glasgow, "It appears that in consequence of the sudden restriction by the Bank of England of its discounts to the American houses, such discredit has at length attached to their bills as to render them of no use for ordinary commercial purposes. The consequence is, that all the remittances from America, in payment for goods, or debts of any kind, are no longer available, because bankers refuse to receive them. Cotton and other articles of produce have also become of no value for the purpose of meeting engagements, for they cannot be sold; and advances cannot, as at the Bank of England the drafts of merchants on brokers who hold produce are refused discount."—APRIL 15. "The Bank of England has come to the determination to assist the American houses on proof of solvency and assignment of their effects to two bank proprietors."—APRIL 23. "The distress has now reached the working classes. In this town and its neighbourhood, many of the factories are working only four days a week, and some thousands of hand-loom weavers have been discharged. The next effect will be the impoverishment of the retail dealers."—MAY 6. More heavy failures reported.—MAY 13. Heavy failures in Glasgow

and Liverpool.—JUNE 10. “The failure of Thomas Wilson and Co., George Wildes and Co., and Timothy Wiggin and Co., consequent upon the refusal of the Bank to render them any further assistance, was unexpected, as it was generally understood that the directors, when they assisted them before, had, by an actual examination by two of their own body, assured themselves of the undoubted solvency of each of the houses.”—JUNE 17th. “In Liverpool great anxiety was felt to know the determination of the Bank of England with regard to W. and J. Brown and Co., but it was yesterday removed by the arrival of an express with the intelligence that they were to be supported, their statement to the bank showing a surplus of a million sterling after paying all liabilities.”—JUNE 24th. “We are happy to have it in our power to state that the grey market this week has undergone a decided improvement. We do not mean to say that prices have advanced, but then the sacrifices on cloth which have been made for the last two months, have now ceased, and if profits are not yet to be realized, goods are fetching the cost of production.”

Facilities of obtaining discounts much encouraged overtrading; the sudden contraction of discounts created a panic; “confidence” was restored by the resumption of discounts, and some judiciously applied loans. The evil day was put off—for a time. During the fright, and after it was over, few thought that it might not have occurred at all, had we been able to import corn as regularly as we imported cotton.

In the House of Commons, in March, Mr. Clay moved the adoption of a fixed duty of 10s. a quarter on wheat, and the following members, connected with government, voted in favour of the motion :—

Lord Howick,	Mr. C. P. Thomson,
Lord Morpeth,	Sir Henry Parnell,
Sir George Grey,	Mr. Labouchere,
Mr. John Parker,	Mr. J. A. Murray,
Sir R. Rolfe,	Mr. W. Cooper.

On the division only 89 voted for the motion, and 223 against it. In debate upon another question—the ballot—Lord John Russell repeated the declaration he had made during the progress of the Reform Bill, that he intended by that measure to leave a preponderating weight in favour of the landed interest. The division on the Corn-Law motion was not a bad proof that he had succeeded.

In June, William the Fourth died, Victoria reigned in his stead, the whig ministers were continued in office, and the people were told that her Majesty had “confided to Lord Melbourne the most ample powers to regulate his plans in such a manner as to secure an efficient government to advance the public welfare.” This assurance, sent forth through a great many channels, with the belief that although Queen Adelaide had obstructed some beneficial measures, Queen Victoria would be more favourable to the advancement of representative and commercial reforms, was not without effect upon the subsequent general election, and ministers found better support than might have been expected after the previous gradual declension of their popularity. It was charitably supposed that backed, instead of being opposed, by the court, they would “bombard the Lords with good measures;” and yet, perhaps, votes were given rather to keep the tories out than to keep the whigs in.

The electors of Manchester re-asserted their free trade principles by again electing Thomson and Philips. The former had a majority of 1,803 votes, and the latter 1,434 over Mr. W. E. Gladstone. Salford, in spite of intimidation and shameless treating, re-elected Brotherton. Wigan and Oldham each ousted a protectionist. Cobden, who had by that time fairly come out into public life, and had proved that he could speak as well as he wrote, was proposed, during his absence on the Continent, as a candidate for Stockport, and the contest was so close as to give a positive assurance of success at any future election.

Hindley, one of the early free traders, was re-elected for Ashton, after a fierce and unprincipled opposition. Mr. J. B. Smith, soon afterwards to be more heard of in connection with the free-trade movement, was defeated at Blackburn only by corruption.

It was asserted by obstructives and protectionists that there was a reaction in their favour. There might be, but it was where the constituencies were so small as to render them easily corrupted, or where the leaven of old corruption had been allowed to remain. Fifty boroughs might have been named, returning seventy or eighty protectionists, the united constituencies of which did not exceed the number of voters in Manchester. The constituents of London, Westminster, Mary-le-bone, Finsbury, the Tower Hamlets, Southwark, and Lambeth, representing a million and a half of the inhabitants of the metropolis; the electors of Nottingham and Leicester, representing a quarter of a million of persons in the lace and hosiery manufactures; the electors of Leeds, the centre and market of the woollen manufactures, and representing commercially a million of souls; the constituency of Birmingham, representing the opinions of half-a-million of persons in the iron trade; the electors of Sheffield, representing a quarter of a million of persons in various branches of the same trade; the electors of Glasgow, Paisley, and Greenock, representing the opinions of half-a-million of persons engaged in the cotton manufactures of the west of Scotland, and connected with the great shipping interests of the district; the electors of Edinburgh, the metropolis of Scotland; and of Dundee, Perth, and Aberdeen, representing another half-a-million of persons—all returned reformers.

Here then were thirty-eight members, the fair representatives, because elected where bribery and intimidation had little force, of some five millions of persons. The obstructives could not show a like constituency for all the

members they returned. Their gains were obtained in the old corporations, where "freemen" had for a century been bought like cattle at a market; in the little boroughs, where there were only 200, 300, or 400 electors, and where the balance might have been turned by a *douceur* of ten or twenty pounds each to some twenty or thirty persons; in certain counties where protectionist landowners could influence at will the tenants-at-will; and in certain boroughs where an extensive manufacturer, or a many-acred neighbouring gentleman, brought all his powers of intimidation into play. At a dinner given to Mr. Brotherton, in Salford, Mr. Cobden delivered an admirable speech on the vote by ballot, and showed how different would have been the result of the general election had the electors been protected from the operation of undue influences. The new Parliament did not meet till November. There was the grouse shooting and the partridge shooting to be attended to; the ministers had to consider how, with the deliverance from one Queen, whose adverse influence was a plausible excuse for stand-still policy, they could find one equally plausible for standing still under one with whom, as they took good care to let the people know, they stood in high favour.

In the early part of 1838, some journeymen cotton spinners, of Glasgow, were tried and sentenced to transportation for life, for the part they had taken, as trade-unionists, which led to murder and the destruction of property. An able writer in *Tait's Magazine*, took occasion thence to warn the working classes that they were dissipating the strength which ought to be concentrated into one united effort for the destruction of the landowners' monopoly. In reference to the warning and the advice I said: "There is great truth in these observations. Let the working classes consider the ceaseless labour and the enormous expense they have incurred within the last dozen years to get rid of the Combination Laws, to destroy



the truck system, to establish Co-operative Societies, and Regeneration Societies, to shorten the hours of labour, to bolster up the wages of some particular class of workmen by unions, to fill the country with a cry against the New Poor Law—and all this with a staff of *paid* treasurers, *paid* collectors, *paid* secretaries, *paid* itinerant orators, and *paid* newspapers, while, during all the time, the Corn Laws are grinding down the reward of their labour on the one hand, and raising the price of their food on the other;—let them think of all these things, and reflect in what a different position they would have stood now, had there been, throughout all these years, *one* combined and energetic effort against the landowners monopoly, which has been all the while closing market after market against us, and intercepting the food which a beneficent Providence has produced in abundance for all the people that dwell upon the face of the earth. England might have been a garden in all its length and breadth, had the energies of its people been employed in the right direction. But we blame not the industrious classes alone. The half starved and uninstructed hand-loom weaver has an excuse in the supineness of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, which, for seven years, has not made a single movement against the monopoly which is destroying that trade, the protection of which is the declared object of the association! Gladly should we see the merchants and manufacturers rouse themselves from their apathetic sleep ere their trade be transferred to France, to Switzerland, and Belgium, and the United States—nay, and even to the semi-barbarous Russia. And gladly should we see a contemporaneous delivery of the working classes from their false teachers. We really believe the poor will be right first. Already O'Connor murmurs at the apathy of the working classes; Oastler courts imprisonment as the best means of giving an impulse to his doctrines; already does Stephens counsel a cessation of public exhibitions."

There now began to appear symptoms that merchants and manufacturers were rousing themselves from indifference as to the operations of the Corn Law. At the annual meeting of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, held February 14th, Mr. J. M. Lees, in moving the adoption of the report, congratulated the chamber on the attention which had been paid to the subject of the Corn Law by the directors, who had brought forward an urgent petition for the repeal of the then law. He said that the subject had been introduced to the chamber by Mr. J. B. Smith, several years ago, with great earnestness and zeal, and knowing that Mr. Smith was of the number of directors, he was glad to see the subject receiving the attention it deserved. Mr. Cobden recommended quarterly meetings instead of annual, as there were important questions which ought to come before the members more frequently than once a-year; but the chamber, having done nothing in opposition to the Corn Laws for some ten years, was not to be suddenly persuaded into taking more frequent opportunities of action, and Mr. Cobden had to withdraw his motion. The then average price of wheat was fifty-five shillings and threepence, *only* nineteen shillings and threepence higher than it had been after the harvest of 1835. The chamber had made its protest, and would stand still until a greater pressure came from without.

In March, Mr. Villiers brought forward a motion in the House of Commons, for inquiry into the operation of the Corn Law, and had the support of some members of the administration; but the house would not inquire—would scarcely even listen. The *Manchester Times* thus commented on the debate:—

“The question of the Corn Law is, it seems, an open one; and why? Because ministers know very well that, while the preponderance which the reform was *intended* to give the landed interest continues, there is no chance of the repeal being carried. Mr. Thomson, Sir Henry Parnell, and Lord Dalmeny, may give their votes on this question, because they are sure to be thrown away; but in favour of the ballot they

must not vote, lest it should be carried! ‘By all means, gentlemen,’ may Lord Melbourne be supposed to have said, ‘vote according to your consciences in *this* instance, because it can do no possible harm, and will make you stand well with your constituents at Manchester, Dundee, and Dumferline. The landed interest is so strong in the house, thanks to the Chandos clause which we adopted, and thanks to open voting, which a majority of the cabinet oppose, that you may safely be permitted to add your votes to the small minority. Do as you like to please your constituents, when nothing can be done; do as I like when something may be done.’ Thus, in few words, is the secret of the Corn-Law question being an open one; and the ballot one on which Members of the administration must not accord to the wishes of their constituents. Degrading as it is to those members, and degrading as it is to their several constituencies to suppose such an arrangement, we can put it in no other shape. They may vote for the repeal of the Corn Laws, because it *cannot* be carried while the house is constituted as it now is. They must *not* vote for the ballot, because it *might* be carried, and the repeal of the Corn Laws might follow. Out of 658 members, only 97 voted even for *enquiry* into the operation of those laws, which are shutting market after market against the introduction of our manufactured goods, which are raising up rival manufactures in every part of the world, and which are constantly reducing the wages of our industrious operative, while, at the same time, they make him pay fifty per cent. more for his food than it costs his foreign competitors. Out of 658 members, 97 only can be found to vote for extended trade, cheap bread, and universal comfort. What an argument this is for the ballot and a further extension of the suffrage! Many of Mr. Thomson’s constituents are deeply dissatisfied that he did not aid his colleague in the debate. Mr. Philips made a manly stand, amid loud shouts of ‘divide,’ ‘divide,’ from the landed men, who came, half drunk, to silence, by their unmannerly cries, the representatives of the manufacturing and commercial interests. Mr. Thomson witnessed all this, and yet silently gave his vote, although, on a subsequent evening, he could speak at considerable length in support of Colonel Seale’s motion for grinding foreign corn in bond.”

On the 9th of May another division took place, proving that the slightest modification of the Corn Law would not be listened to. The motion was for the second reading of a bill to permit the grinding of wheat in bond for foreign export. The Marquis of Chandos, author of the famous “clause” in the Reform Bill, which gave a preponderance

to the landed interest in the Commons, told the house that "the agricultural interest was now enjoying some little respite from the distress of past years, and all it asked was for peace and quietness, *and that it should not be inconvenienced by legislative enactments of any kind.*" Peace and quietness! Oh, certainly; peace and quietness to the robber who retires to enjoy himself on the produce of his adroitness. "We have levied black-mail upon you. We are only now beginning to enjoy ourselves; why cannot you let us alone!" His lordship was contented with the share of the spoil which the law had awarded him, and he asked to be "let alone!" The three members for Manchester, Mr. Thomson, Mr. Philips, and Mr. Brotherton, did their duty upon the occasion, and Mr. Villiers delivered a speech full of spirit and truth. He regarded the rejection of the measure as the East-Retford of Corn Laws. "To reject this measure, would be like that preliminary folly which characterised those whom Heaven marked as its victims. He thought the rejection of the measure would really arouse that feeling which had been dormant too long on the subject of the Corn Laws; and he should, therefore, go to the division perfectly at ease, satisfied that nothing but good could follow from it. They who wanted to gain partisans in favour of the repeal of the Corn Laws could find nothing better suited to their purpose than the irrational opposition afforded by the landed interest to this measure, which was, in fact, the East-Retford of the Corn Laws. (Laughter, and loud cries of 'Divide!') The rejection of such a measure as the present would excite a strong and general feeling of indignation against those by whom it was resisted." There were 150 votes for the motion, and 220 against it. Mr. Villiers' prognostication was well founded. The time was coming when men were to see that nothing was to be expected from even a reformed Parliament, without such an outward pressure as carried the Reform Bill.



On July 2nd, a petition from Glasgow was presented by Earl Fitzwilliam, praying for the repeal of the Corn Law, and his lordship gave it his earnest support. The debate that ensued was in most respects just of the character which had always marked the treatment of a question affecting the profits of that house of corn dealers on the one hand, and the comfortable subsistence of twenty-six millions of people on the other. Some symptoms of fear appeared, if not of repentance, on the part of one or two of the titled monopolists who spoke on the occasion. Apprehensions of short harvests, dear bread, and a probable famine, floated across their brains, and found utterance in some warning prognostications as to the effect of such accidents upon the fate of the question then under discussion. Their lordships were right! A wet July might come. August might find the country with scarcely a month's consumption of corn on hand, and the ports of continental Europe drained for the supply of the United States. We were then entirely dependant on the still ungathered harvest for preservation against greater misery than ever afflicted a civilised community. To the Corn Law it was owing that no sacks of wheat or other grain were filling the granaries of our own capitalists, or awaiting their orders in the stores of Hamburg or Odessa; and if starvation should stalk through the land, every additional death would be attributed to those laws.

But the remarkable feature of the debate was to be found in Lord Melbourne's declaration, that the Government would not take a decided part, till it was certain the majority of the people were in favour of a change. "This," I said, "ought to be a sufficient warning to the masses, that they must depend upon their own exertions, and not trust to the ministry, or the legislature for justice. It is a fair invitation to the people to begin that agitation from without, which whether in reform of Parliament, Catholic Emancipation, or Corn Laws, can alone extricate the



many from the gripe of the monopolists, who, though few in numbers, still hold possession of the powers of government. The people must begin by returning members to Parliament favourable to the repeal of the bread tax. It is a remarkable fact, that in Lancashire, taking the town and country together, the supporters and opponents of an impost, the most destructive and fatal to our manufacturing property, should be so nearly balanced; that is, so far as regards the *number of members returned*. But Manchester being balanced by Liverpool, and the four county members being all tory, and of course supporters of the Corn Laws, the preponderance is greatly against the repeal of those laws. Whilst such a state of things exists, notwithstanding there are so many liberal men, and so great a number of Catholics and dissenters in this county, what is so natural as that Lord Melbourne should feel some doubts, whether the people of England are really opposed to the present restriction of the duties on corn under the sliding scale."

Early in August the price of wheat was 72s. per quarter, and rising in consequence of wet weather. It had been just half that price at the close of the harvest of 1835. The average price for the week ending August 24th, was 77s. It was high time to be up and stirring. Colonel Thompson, whose "Anti-Corn-Law Catechism," published some ten years before, had been much read, was again at work—had never, indeed, ceased to work through one channel or another—in the *Sun* newspaper, slaying, in his trenchant way, every fallacy that was uttered in favour of monopoly; Joseph Sturge was urging instant action on the part of free traders; and newspapers which had only occasionally and gently hinted at the operation of the Corn Law, were earnestly pointing out the mischief which it inflicted. There was no longer faith that even a reformed Parliament would attack the grievous monopoly without a strong pressure from without.

## CHAPTER V.

### ORIGIN OF THE LEAGUE.

With the prospect of a wet autumn, and a deficient harvest, or wheat inferior in quality, requiring an admixture of foreign-grown, not admissable but at heavy duties, it seemed likely that a lecturer would find audiences. There was a certain Dr. Birnie, who, about the end of July, announced a lecture on the Corn Laws in the Bolton Theatre. There was a good attendance, and the lecturer was well received; but he had provided himself with a great bundle of papers, and he could not readily find those to which he wished to refer. When he did find them he read them badly, his connecting observations were not understandable, and, the meeting expressing its impatience, he came to a complete stand still. In one of the boxes sat several gentlemen with Mr. Abraham Walter Paulton, a young medical student. Mr. Thomas Thomasson said: "Do Paulton get on the stage and say something, and don't let such a meeting be lost." The young man rushed round to the stage, and asked the meeting to hear him for a few minutes. The people had come to hear, and they called "hear, hear," and "go on." He did go on for a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes, and created a wish that he should be heard more at length; and it was arranged that he should deliver a lecture there on Monday, August 6th. The theatre on that night was crowded, and the young lecturer not only showed that he had carefully

studied the question, but that he had, in his earnestness and energy, and mastery of appropriate language, and combination of argument, with appeals to high moral principle, the power of deeply interesting an audience.

Dr. Bowring was to pass through Manchester, on the 10th September, on his way from Liverpool to Blackburn, where a public dinner was to be given in his honour. He had recently returned from a mission to promote more free commercial intercourse with some of the European powers, and with the Viceroy of Egypt; and I, thinking that the relation of his experience would be useful at a time when men began to talk one with another about the absurdity as well as the iniquity of the corn monopoly, sent out a hundred circulars, saying that some friends of free trade would meet him at the York Hotel on the evening of that day. About sixty responded to the very hasty invitation. I was called upon to take the chair, and Mr. Philip Thomson the vice-chair. Dr. Bowring being introduced to the meeting, was received with great enthusiasm. After alluding to the desolation he had witnessed, the result of the long war between Turkey and Egypt, and to the prospects that would be opened out by a more general recognition of the principles of peace, he said :—

“ It is impossible to estimate the amount of human misery created by the Corn Laws, or the amount of human pleasure overthrown by them. In every part of the world I have found the plague-spot. Some years ago I was sent to agitate—for our government is sometimes engaged in the work of honourable agitation—France in the interest of free trade; and so strong was the excitement that the south of France menaced the north of France with a separation, unless the commercial code was modified. It was modified to some extent, and I have had the pleasure of seeing the exports of France trebled in consequence of the change. (Loud cheers.) But when I went into Normandy and Brittany, what said the Normans and the Britons? Why, said they, ‘ Admit our corn, and then we’ll see whether anybody can prevent the importation of your manufactures into France.’ (Cheers.) ‘ We are millions,’ said they, ‘ willing to clothe ourselves in the garments you

send us, and you have millions of hungry mouths to take our corn.' The same language is held by every nation in trade. We talk, and with some good reason, about the evils inflicted by some of the minor German states who have consented to increase the duties upon British manufactures. They have been following the advice of certain honourable gentlemen who have ever that most mischievous word 'reciprocity' upon their lips, for no word has done so much damage to commerce as that word. Why every man who buys, sells reciprocity; and every man who sells, buys reciprocity; and if one government had courage to become a destructive government and overthrow 'reciprocity' in the intercourse of nation and nation, it would do a noble deed. I wish my right honourable friend, your representative, would consider this his high and noble mission—(cheers)—and that he would obliterate from the statute-book every statute by which governments have pretended to teach merchants how to trade, and manufacturers how to work. Gentlemen, but what did Prussia say? No doubt the object of Prussia was political rather than commercial, for she managed so that she got a great many little states in her power, and influenced their commercial interests while she interfered with their political position. I believe that Prussia made a great mistake, because she is not powerful enough to overpower the smaller states, and the smaller states being a 'bundle of sticks' which Prussia had unwittingly tied fast together, they were enabled to dictate terms to Prussia herself. But the Prussian union say, 'we do not wish to legislate against the introduction of your manufactures—take our corn and our timber and we will take your manufactures;' and many said to me, 'We hold this union as a means of forcing you to change your legislation.' (Hear, hear.) If I could, or if I had any influence with the Prussian ministry, I would say, 'Take goods from England, and no doubt the English people will have good prices for them, for I do not think it likely our merchants will long sell their goods unless they can obtain their value.' And I believe the great secret of the mode of changing the legislation of every country is to change your own; admit what you want, buy what you want upon the cheapest terms, and be sure that those who sell it to you will be paid. Now, a very serious state of things has come on in consequence of the existence of these Corn Laws. Nobody can estimate the amount of capital withdrawn from agriculture, in order to be applied to manufactures in consequence of our not taking from other nations the commodities with which they would buy our goods. The other day coming down the Danube, an Hungarian nobleman told me that they had quite ceased to think of producing corn for the English market, and they were turning their capital to manufacturing, as they could not sell their corn. (Hear, hear.) There was abundance of corn

in the country, but not sufficient clothing for the use of the people, and so the Austrian government was led to encourage commerce, to discourage English manufactures, and to manufacture for themselves. (Hear, hear.) And this is a state of things which Corn-Law legislation is bringing about in all directions. (Hear, hear.) I have heard it said, and it seems to have had some influence upon the labouring people, that the introduction of foreign corn is the inevitable way to lower wages. I say, that, if there be any certain means of raising wages, it is by the admission of foreign corn. (Cheers.) What are the two countries that have had the wisdom to avoid Corn-Law legislation? They are Holland and Switzerland; in which wages are higher than in any country in Europe! (Hear, hear.) And that is invariably the case. Wages are almost always raised where the greatest demand for labour is introduced; and the demand for labour is always introduced with the introduction of a foreign competition in corn. Switzerland, it is true, was, two generations ago, in a state of extreme wretchedness and misery, with emigrations of immense masses of her population taking place every six or eight years, and with the population reduced to the verge of starvation, a great portion of the country being composed of desolate mountains, of uncultivated tracts, and the people in a state of sad ignorance. What has occurred there? The people have attained more political ideas, and have applied them to the attainment of political knowledge; that political knowledge has given them a sound commercial legislation, and now the rate of wages in Switzerland is far higher than the rate in any other country in Europe; and with regard to the price of commodities, between thirty and forty per cent. higher than the rate of wages here. (Hear.) I have seen more than one instance of an artisan in Switzerland—where commodities are universally low, in consequence of free trade which is universally adopted—getting from ten to fourteen shillings per day by hand labour. (Cheers.) Holland—a country if ever there was one which could be, as the Duke of Wellington said in the House of Lords, reduced to the humiliating necessity of depending upon foreign lands for a supply of food, which he made an argument for the Corn Laws—Holland depends upon every country. When was she ever short? I venture to say that no granaries in any country were ever so well filled. Every body there knows the rate of wages, because they know with every slight alteration in price they can estimate what the loaf of bread will cost them and their families. But now, when the Corn Laws are about to be overwhelmed—because I do not believe that, in the state of public opinion, they can stand—we shall find that we shall not get one-twentieth of the benefits of national interchange we should have had, if there had been no Corn Law at all. My belief is that if this country imported one or two



millions of quarters of wheat from foreign lands, the consumption would increase to that extent, for it is astonishing how much consumption increases where the price of corn is low, and where trade is healthy and prosperous. There are many districts in which the increase of consumption is only one-fifth: but were it one-tenth it would make an increase of two millions of quarters, and the introduction of two millions of quarters of corn would be the export of between four and five millions of manufactures in order to accomplish the payment. My friend (the chairman) referred to some circumstances which took place in Egypt. It is almost repeating myself and him to advert to the subject again, but the facts are so interesting that I must be excused for doing so. Egypt, it is well known to you, has been for between 3000 and 4000 years the granary of the world. It was the granary of the world in the time of the patriarchs, and from the time of Pharoah to the present day. Even when its population was between seven and eight millions (and it is now, perhaps, not more than two millions), it produced not only sufficient for its own consumption, but its overflowing harvests were diffused to every place throughout the Mediterranean, and their superabundance supplied food for more than Egyptian mouths. The Pasha, who is a very intelligent and a very remarkable man, and a man capable of reasoning, and a man, more than any Turk I ever met with, alive to the great interests of the country, had been interfering with the introduction of corn, and put a heavy duty on, under the belief that his all-productive country never could want corn. But it happened there, as it will happen anywhere, that any interference with production is an embarrassment to production, and that capital, finding itself embarrassed and annoyed by each interference, applies itself to other channels; and when I was in Egypt the people were absolutely menaced with a famine, and in Cairo corn could scarcely be had for love or for money, or even with the despotic orders of the Pasha in hand. I did speak to the Pasha upon the subject, and I told him that he was deluded by those about him, and like other monarchs surrounded by mere flatterers, who rather told him that which was not true than that which was. I told him how the country was menaced with nothing less than starvation, and that, if the system were continued, he would probably see his army in a state of revolt, for it was true in Africa as well as England, that no revolt was so terrible as that of the belly. He did, after a long debate, and after fighting very heroically in the Chandos style, give way, and said he thought it was better to let corn come in and go out of the ports without any duty whatever. I ventured to assure him he would soon see the beneficial consequences. I had reason to say so, for it was then at 180 piastres, but after this it fell down to seventy. Corn thenceforward came in and went out to all quarters, and I left Egypt exporting instead of

importing corn; and, as I believe the folly of interference will not again be committed, I have no doubt Egypt will become the land of plenty, which she had been for ages. (Cheers.)”

After adverting to the improvement which would take place in countries desolated by war, were the principles of free trade recognised, Dr. Bowring exclaimed: “Why, England, if only she pleased, might become the universal benefactor! Ask the Duke of Wellington, and the other advocates of the Corn Laws, as to what would be the consequences of a war? Do you believe that war would be possible when we had universal trade? Who quarrels with his benefactor? Or if he quarrel, does he not ere long seek to heal the breach? Who would seek to quarrel with those who were perpetually communicating to them benefits and blessings? Gentlemen, I hope the time is coming when the warrior will not be looked to as the defender of England, but the peace maker. The happy state of things will come, in which we shall look on the victories of commerce, and the victories of peace, as far more glorious than any that have been gathered in fields where blood has been poured out like water.”

Mr. George Hadfield said that although the Corn Law had been passed against the will of the people, most strongly manifested, it was extraordinary that from that time to the present there had not been one simultaneous popular effort made to overturn it. We seemed, therefore, to have degenerated, and with all our talk of the advance of political science, seemed to have been going down the hill instead of up it. Well might Lord Chandos say that the farmer was beginning to be at peace on this question. He was sorry to see men trying to set reformers at variance on other questions in order to keep them back from looking at this. The repeal of the Corn Laws would probably amount to six times the good that would attend the repeal of the new Poor Law. The profit to the country would probably be six times the amount paid to the poor alto-

gether. The aristocracy had joined the outcry against the new Poor Law, and talked about the rights of the poor merely by way of throwing as they thought a tub to the whale, and drawing the attention of the people from looking at heavier grievances. And should this continue? Should not this great town exert its powers and say at once, "We will not have our trade shackled by your laws, made—not for the farmer as was pretended, not for the benefit of the country at large,—but exclusively to maintain high rents?" It was time to unite heart and hand on this question, and challenge the whole country to put their shoulder to the wheel, and get rid of a system alike offensive to the laws of God and man. This incitement to action was followed by loud cheering.

I then proposed the health of Colonel Thompson, whose writings in favour of reform had done much to procure an amendment of the representative system, and who, in addition to the instruction so well given in his "Corn Law Catechism," was then engaged in exposing every new landlord fallacy. The toast was received with loud applause. The next I gave was, "The health and happiness of the poor hand-loom weavers, who have set the example of petitioning for the repeal of the Corn Laws." I said, "I could not but regret that the merchants and manufacturers of Manchester should have been so long supine under a system which threatened to deprive us of a great portion of our commerce, and that their Chamber of Commerce had been so long inert under it. However, an example had been set them by the HAND-LOOM WEAVERS, during the late inquiry into their condition, when a number of them met, and came to the conclusion that whatever might be attempted for their relief (and amongst the systems proposed was the constitution of a board of masters and men to settle disputes about prices, as in France), no benefit could reach them without a repeal of the Corn Laws. These men, who were so reduced that they could not buy

the paper for a petition without assistance, had sent up a petition for the repeal of the Corn Laws, bearing 22,000 signatures. I could not help thinking that it was degrading to the merchants, manufacturers, and tradesmen of a town like this, that the poor hand-loom weavers should have to set them this example."

Mr. James Howie, a man always prompt for action, said that what had just fallen from the chairman reminded him that we had here no Anti-Corn-Law Association. He believed that if the devil himself had contrived a system for the destruction of the human race, he could not have framed a code of laws more adapted for the purpose than the insolent aristocracy had done. He should propose that the present company at once form themselves into such an association, and though few in number, be the rolling stone that should gather strength in its progress. Mr. Howie's proposition was well received, and I requested all who were favourable to its object, to meet at the same place on the following Monday evening.

The health of Mr. Paulton was then given, with commendation of his lectures at Bolton; of Mark Philip, M.P. for the borough; of Earl Fitzwilliam, as an opponent of the Corn Laws; and of Mr. Brotherton, M.P. for Salford, to which his brother-in-law, Mr. Wm. Harvey, responded.

M. Frederic Bastiat, in his "*Cobden et la Ligue*," published in 1845, says: "Seven men united themselves at Manchester, in the month of October, 1838; and with that manly determination which characterizes the Anglo-Saxon race, they resolved to overturn every monopoly by legal means, and accomplish without disturbance, without effusion of blood, with the power only of opinion, a revolution as profound, perhaps more profound, than that which our fathers worked to effect in 1789." There is no reason why the names of those seven men, possessing "cette virile determination qui caracterise la race Anglo-Saxonne," should not be known. The first meeting to

form the Association was held at the York Hotel, on Monday, September 24th, and was attended by the following persons: Edward Baxter, W. A. Cunningham, Andrew Dalziel, James Howie, James Leslie, Archibald Prentice, and Philip Thomson. At this meeting the failure of former associations was attributed to the want of a popular foundation, and it was resolved that the subscriptions should be only five shillings, in order that all classes should be included as members. Some apprehension was expressed that persons not disposed to demand the total repeal of the Corn Laws might join the association, and destroy its hold on public confidence by asking for a half-measure, to which the reply was that the very name the *Anti-Corn-Law* Association, which meant an association *against any corn law*, would be a guarantee against any future change of its purpose. The meeting had just closed when Mr. William Rawson, afterwards treasurer for the League, arrived, having come hastily from Liverpool on purpose to be present, and found two or three members with whom he conversed on the object of the Association.

The second meeting was held on the Monday following, and was attended by W. A. Cunningham, Andrew Dalziel, James Howie, James Leslie, Archibald Prentice, William Rawson, and Philip Thomson.

Subscriptions had been obtained since the previous meeting from about fifty persons, and the small committee felt assured that their still feeble association would not expire until its great object should be accomplished. In my paper of October 6th, I said :—" We believe that what might be thought to be apathy on the part of the merchants and manufacturers of Manchester upon the subject of the Corn Laws, has arisen from there being no organization for the expression of their opinions. They have expected that the Chamber of Commerce would commence the movement, but that self-constituted body, having satis-



fied itself with a single petition in seven years, seems to have fallen into another seven years' sleep. The necessity of a new association has forced itself upon the attention of many of the most influential friends of free trade, and we are glad to say that at their meeting, on Thursday evening, the names of nearly one hundred members were enrolled. They meet again next Thursday, and we trust that those who are already members will each bring a list with him of the names of half-a-dozen friends, so as to make the association at once formidable from its numbers and local influence."

In my paper of October 13th I find the following advertisement, announcing the formation of a committee, which contained the names of a number of gentlemen, many of whom became from that day prominent members of the association, and of the subsequently formed League.

### ANTI-CORN-LAW ASSOCIATION.

#### PROVISIONAL COMMITTEE.

Elkanah Armitage, Cromford Court.	Thomas Lockett, Richmond Hill.
John Bright, Rochdale.	Thos. Mollineux, Ancoats Crescent.
Robert Bunting, Ardwick Green.	James Murray, Ancoats Hall.
James Chapman, York-street.	Robert Nicholson, Market-street.
W. R. Callender, Mosley-street.	Aaron Nodal, Downing-street.
J. C. Dyer, Burnage.	Robert Philips, jun., Church-street.
Walter Clarke, Duke-street.	Thomas Potter, George-street.
John Dracup, Chapel-street, Salford.	Archibald Prentice, Ducie Place.
Peter Eckersley, St. Mary's Gate.	S. P. Robinson, Tipping's Court.
J. G. Frost, Water-street.	Jonathan Rawson, Cromford Court.
George Hadfield, Fountain-street.	W. Rawson, New Brown-street.
Thomas Harbottle, Norfolk-street.	Absalom Watkin, High-street.
Andrew Hall, Brown-street.	George Wilson, Shudehill.
Jas. Hampson, Great Ancoats-street.	Henry Wilson, Walton's Buildings.
Thomas Hopkins, Broughton Lane.	Richard Wilson, Market Place.
James Howie, King street.	C. J. S. Walker, Longford.
Wm. Harvey, New Cannon-street.	T. H. Williams, Greenheys.
Alexander Henry, Portland-street.	Henry Wadkin, Short-street.
James Kershaw, High-street.	

JOHN BENJAMIN SMITH, Treasurer.

The association now felt itself strong enough to commence operations, and I was deputed to proceed to Bolton, and endeavour to persuade Mr. Paulton to favour us with a lecture or two in Manchester. He readily consented, and his first lecture was announced to take place in the Corn Exchange. Next week, there was an announcement of the addition of the following names to the Provisional Committee:—

James Ashworth, High-street.	William Lockett, Richmond-street.
Andrew Bannerman, Market street.	
Jno. Brewer, Newmarket Buildings.	William Labrey, Market Place.
Matthew Binns, Cannon-street.	John Mallon, Oldham-street.
James Carlton, New High-street.	Henry Marsland, Fountain-street.
Richard Cobden, Mosley-street.	William Neild, Friday-street.
Edmund Dodgshon, York-street,	John Naylor, Piccadilly.
Cheetham.	John Ogden, Marsden-street.
Edward Evans, Market-street,	John Shuttleworth, New Market
(Nicholson and Evans.)	Buildings.
John Henry Fuller, 24, Bridge-	Robert Stuart, Pall Mall.
water Place.	Charles Tysoe, New Cannon-street.
Jeremiah Garnett, <i>Guardian</i> office,	John Edward Taylor, Market-street.
Market-street.	John Whitlow, Market Place.
J. S. Grafton, Mosley-street.	John Wilkinson, Shakspeare-street,
Edward Hall, New Brown-street.	Ardwick.
Joseph Heron, Princess-street.	— Whitehouse, Fountain-street.
James Hudson.	Samuel Watts, New Brown-street.
John Hyde, Oxford Road.	William Woodcock, 26, Pall Mall.

On calling on Mr. Robert Stuart for his name and his five-shilling subscription, he said: "You will soon need more than such sums—put me down for ten pounds." I have had the curiosity to see to what amount the individuals named as forming the Provisional Committee at that early stage of the movement, subsequently subscribed to the £250,000 League Fund, and I find that they had contributed £10,600, besides having been large subscribers during the previous seven years' arduous contest. Mr. Stuart was right when he said we should need higher than five-shilling subscriptions. But the small sums brought

number, an element to success, and permitted constant additions of earnest workers, doing work which could not have been bought in the ordinary labour market.

On Thursday evening, October 25th, Mr. Paulton delivered his first lecture to one of the largest audiences ever assembled in the Corn Exchange, every ticket of admission to the lecture room having been eagerly sought for and obtained by the public some hours previous to its commencement, and many applicants were necessarily disappointed. About seven o'clock the Committee of the Anti-Corn-Law Association took their seats on the platform, and J. B. Smith, Esq., having been called upon to preside, in introducing Mr. Paulton, said he would take the opportunity of stating the objects for which the association had been established: "It had been established on the same righteous principle as the Anti-Slavery Society. The object of that society was to obtain the free right for the negroes to possess their own flesh and blood—the object of this was to obtain the free right of the people to exchange their labour for as much food as could be got for it; that we might no longer be obliged by law to buy our food at one shop, and that the dearest in the world, but be at liberty to go to that at which it can be obtained cheapest. It was an object in which men of all political opinions might unite without compromising those principles, and it was a fundamental rule of the association that no party politics should be mixed up in the discussion of the question. It might seem to be a work of supererogation to prove that a man had a right to a big loaf, but when we saw the nobles of the land, the majority of our senators, and men of wealth and education contending that the indulgence of an appetite for big loaves was fraught with consequences no less serious than the ruin of the landowner, the farmer, the labourer, and ultimately of the nation, it was then that lectures like these became necessary to show the absurdity and fallacy of such asser-

tions. Mr. Paulton was a big-loaf man, but if any of the little-loaf men, or any of the noble lords who occasionally came amongst us on visits of humanity, to inquire into the condition of the poor factory children, or the wretchedness of the hand-loom weaver, would favour us with a lecture to make us sensible of the benefits we derive from little loaves, as friends of free discussion as well as free trade, he thought he could promise them from the meeting a fair and patient hearing." The lecture occupied more than two hours in the delivery, but there was not the slightest appearance of weariness on the part of the audience, and Mr. Paulton retired amidst loud and long-continued cheers.

The second and concluding lecture of Mr. Paulton took place at the Corn Exchange, on Thursday evening, November 1st, to a still more crowded audience than before. Mr. J. B. Smith, in again introducing Mr. Paulton, said it was gratifying to notice the increasing interest which was manifesting itself on this question, as shown by the application of other towns soliciting his services to give lectures there on the Corn Laws. The committee were endeavouring to effect an arrangement with him for this purpose, and hoped to obtain his powerful aid in thus spreading the knowledge he was able to impart on this question. He reminded the audience that these lectures were given gratuitously, and said it was gratifying to observe that Mr. Paulton was actuated by no mercenary motives. Mr. Paulton again excited the enthusiasm of his auditors. At the conclusion of his lecture he quoted the following lines which have been frequently used by other speakers since :

“ For what were all these landed patriots born ?

To hunt, and vote, and raise the price of corn.

Safe in their barns, these Sabine tillers sent

Their brethren out to battle. Why ? For rent !

Year after year they voted cent. per cent. ;

Blood, sweat, and tear-wrung millions. Why ? For rent !

They roared, they dined, they drank, they swore, they meant

To die for England. Why then live? For rent!  
And will they not repay the treasure lent?  
No! down with everything, and up with rent!  
Their good, ill, health, wealth, joy, or discontent,  
Being, end, aim, religion—rent, rent, rent!”

In my paper of the 10th of November, I had again occasion to congratulate the public on the rapid progress of the new agitation:—"The movement against the Corn Laws is likely to be the most formidable ever made. The apathy for which we have blamed the population of large towns has not existed, for all that has been wanted has been concentration of opinion, and this will be obtained by associations such as the one of which Manchester has set the example. *There needs but a spark to ignite the mass of smouldering discontent.* To supply this, let lectures be delivered everywhere, bringing into one view all the mischiefs that are occasioned by the starvation-creating laws, and the certain ruin of our manufacturers and work-people, by the refusal to receive agricultural produce in exchange for the produce of their capital and labour. The landlord papers in the metropolis have taken alarm, and are abusing Mr. Paulton in good set terms for the boldness with which he denounces the robbery. We rejoice to think that he will soon deserve a larger share of their abuse. On Monday the 26th, and Wednesday the 28th instant, he will lecture in the Birmingham Town Hall, a magnificent building, capable of containing from 4,000 to 5,000 persons, and we have no doubt that it will be filled on each occasion. In the mean time invitations pour in upon the eloquent lecturer from the large towns in our neighbourhood, and he has been pressingly requested not to omit the agricultural towns in Norfolk, where the opinion is fast spreading, that the Corn Laws are injurious rather than beneficial to the farmers, the farm-labourers, and all with whom they expend their money."



## CHAPTER VI.

### MEETING OF THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE.

The outward pressure acted upon the Manchester Chamber of Commerce. A requisition to the president, George Wm. Wood, Esq., M.P. for Kendal, to call a special general meeting, "to take into consideration the propriety of petitioning Parliament for the repeal of the existing Corn Laws," was signed by Henry Tootal, William Atkinson, J. C. Prescott, Alex. Henry (afterwards M.P. for South Lancashire), James Atherton, John Macvicar, John Smith, Richard Marsden, Henry Romilly, R. Gladstone, Thomas Townend, William Nield, John Bradshaw, jun., George Sandars, (afterwards M.P. for Wakefield), Thomas Bazley (afterwards President of the Chamber), Rupert Ingleby, Richard Birley, and William Gibb. The majority of the requisitionists were understood to be favourable to a moderate fixed duty, or a modified sliding scale of lower duties, such as Sir Robert Peel afterwards proposed, and, with the exception of Mr. Henry and Mr. Bazley, none took any very active part in the subsequent agitation for total repeal, and Mr. Sandars was rather opposed to it. At a meeting of the directors, a series of propositions, declaratory of the evils resulting from the existing laws, was submitted to their consideration, and received their approval; and the president was requested to draw up, in accordance with the declarations, the prayer of the petition to Parliament.

The general meeting of members was held on the 13th of December, and was the largest which had ever assembled in the chamber. The president made a good speech on the injury to commerce inflicted by the existing laws, but without any indication of his opinion as to the necessity of their total repeal, and from the great stress which he laid upon the repeated and excessive fluctuations of price under the then sliding scale, it might be presumed that he would gladly accept such modifications of that scale as would permit corn "to flow in regularly as wanted." Mr. Samuel Fletcher, after some sensible remarks on the absurdity of supposing that we ought to make ourselves independent of other nations, in matters of exchange, and the expression of his belief that "a reduction of the duties on corn" would not be injurious to the interests of the landowner, moved that a petition for the repeal of the Corn Laws be presented to the House of Commons. The motion, seconded by Mr. John Macvicar, was then put and carried.

The President then read the petition which, embodying a series of declarations of the evils occasioned by the existing laws, met with the approval generally of the members, but the prayer with which it ended was considered as a most lame and impotent conclusion: "Your petitioners address your honourable house on this subject in no spirit of partisanship. They do not desire the exclusive advantage of a class, but the equal good of all; they wish to see the trade in corn conducted, as far as possible, on the principles of other trades; in a sober, regular course, and not by perpetual jerks and impulses, arising out of extraordinary emergencies: to see it flow in a regular, equable current, supplying the wants of the country without overwhelming it. Your petitioners hope, that your honourable house will take the measures in accordance with these sentiments, and with the opinions they have ventured to offer to your notice." Mr. William Nield, in moving the adop-

tion of the petition, argued the fairness of subjecting agriculture to the same competition which trade had to encounter, and declared his belief that land had not been so productive as it might have been if the owners had exercised their energies in increasing its productiveness. Mr. Richard Birley seconded the motion; and the President rose for the purpose of putting it to the meeting, when Mr. John Benjamin Smith rose and said that he had understood the President to say, that the petition spoke the sentiments of the whole of the directors. He was a director, and he begged to say it did not express his sentiments. The President said he certainly understood that Mr. Smith had agreed to the petition on the day before. Mr. Smith replied that he did agree to what he then heard, but some passages had been added since; he believed that it was in the prayer of the petition that passages had been added from which he could not but dissent. "The inference to be drawn from that prayer was, that the chamber approved of a protective Corn Law of some sort—an inference which he could never allow to be drawn from any document purporting to bear his sanction. He did not hesitate to say that he could not approve of any protective duty on corn, and that in his opinion the whole course of legislation on the subject had been, from beginning to end, one of the most scandalous instances of landowners legislating for their own benefit, at the expense of the people, that was to be found in the history of legislation in any country of the world." The cheers that greeted this declaration showed that a change had come over the spirit of the chamber. Mr. Smith went on at considerable length to advocate the principles of entirely free trade, and concluded a very effective speech by saying that he thought he he had shown that our Corn-Law legislation had been "one of most shameful injustice, and that they should so state in their petition, with the addition that while the members of the chamber sought for abolition of the Corn

Laws, *they were not so unjust and inconsistent as to ask any protection for manufactures.*"

Mr. Tootall said that without intending to give any offence he must say that Mr. Smith had given his assent to the petition, provided that a few sentences were added to show that they did not ask for protection to manufactures. Mr. Smith again said that his objection was to the prayer of the petition. Mr. S. Fletcher thought that it was hopeless to draw a document that would suit the views of every individual. The President said he had understood that he was allowed to make such alterations as were in accordance with the sentiments of the directors, and that he had done so ; and he deeply regretted that Mr. Smith had not stated his objections. Mr. Smith replied that " he *had* expressed his opinion that they might embody in their address their wish to give up all protection on manufactures, and thus *anticipate the objections of the agriculturists.*" The President's rejoinder was that Mr. Smith certainly did express his wish that the manufacturers would abandon all protection, but, added he, "*I did not know that all the members would coincide with it, I did not know, for instance, if it would be thought expedient to give up the 20 per cent. now exacted on hosiery.*" Mr. J. C. Dyer followed in a short and pithy speech, embracing the general principles of free trade, and urging the members to take a lead in calling a public meeting on the subject.

Mr. Cobden then addressed the meeting in his quiet and argumentative manner, in a short speech, abounding in familiar but forcible illustration. In reference to the protection of farmers he said : " In a country, such as this, where a boundless extent of capital was yielding only three or four per cent., it was folly to suppose that by any artificial means any *trade* could long be made to pay more than an average rate of profit. The effect of all such restrictions would only be to narrow the field of industry, and thus, in the end, to injure instead of benefiting the parties

intended to be protected. But look at the very opposite position in which the owners of *land* stood. He would suppose that a law could be passed to raise the price of wheat to a thousand shillings a bushel ; now what would be the effect of this, but that the capitalists who now get their ten per cent. profit in London or Manchester would immediately urge their sons to bid fifty per cent. over the farmers of Norfolk, and if these were still in the way of getting higher profits than other trades, then other competitors would appear to bid fifty per cent. over them, until Mr. Coke's farms had reached the full market price, and yielded only the ordinary rate of profit of all other trades. (Hear, hear.) But mark the difference in the situation of the landowner and the calico printer ; while additional mills and print works might be erected to meet the demand for calicoes and prints, not an acre of land could be added to the present domains of the aristocracy, and, therefore, every shilling of protection on corn must pass into the pockets of the landowners, without at all benefiting the tenant or the agricultural labourer ; whereas, on the other hand, no extent of protection could possibly benefit the manufacturer."

Mr. Cobden's speech was rendered the more telling by the description of what he had observed, during his recent tour on the continent, of the effect of our Corn Laws in encouraging the establishment of rival manufactures. After entreating his hearers not to suffer themselves to be deluded by any other plan which the aristocracy might, with a view to lead them upon a wrong scent, propose to do, whether by war or diplomacy, to benefit trade ; but exhorting them to keep a steady eye on the Corn Law, which was the real and only obstacle to a steady and a large increase of their trade, he concluded by proposing, if it met the views of the directors, to offer a resolution, without at all meaning any disrespect to them, that the chamber should meet again, on the following week, to pass a



petition praying for the total repeal of *all* protective duties whatever.

Mr. Edmund Ashworth, of Bolton, seconded the amendment that the meeting stand adjourned, and that a committee be appointed to prepare a petition for adoption. The petition now proposed, he said, had been approved of by Mr. Fletcher, because it was moderate; his own objection to it was that it wanted energy, and he asked, if that chamber really was in earnest, why it should not speak out? Mr. Fletcher thought the adjournment would be disrespectful to the directors. Mr. Gibb said he would only ask for half the loaf, when they knew they would be refused the whole one. Mr. W. Rawson remarked that a 15 per cent. duty would be as fatal as one of 50. The President said the petition went the whole length of those who asked for an adjournment, only it advocated a *gradual transition* to entire freedom of trade. Mr. Cobden thought the quotation from Mr. Canning had been peculiarly unhappy, for nothing could be more absurd than the concluding sentence about an "overwhelming" supply of corn. Mr. Tootal agreed with Mr. Cobden as to entire repeal; he only differed as to the time and mode. It was no new thing for the chamber to move in the matter of the Corn Laws.

Mr. Dyer: "How often has it petitioned since 1825?"

Mr. J. B. Smith: "Not during ten years up till 1837."

A long discussion ensued, in which the President, Mr. Sandars, and a very few members opposed the adjournment, mainly on the ground that it would be a loss of time further to discuss the question, and ultimately it was agreed that the original motion and the amendment should be withdrawn, and the meeting be adjourned to that day week.

The proceedings of this meeting, reported at great length in the Manchester Saturday's papers (now employing excellent short-hand writers), and copied into the

London daily papers, then giving considerable attention to the expression of Manchester opinion, excited much discussion throughout the kingdom, and much curiosity was manifested to know the result of the renewed debate in a body that had been overtaken by the vice of old corporations—inaptitude to move—into which a new spirit had been infused, struggling for, but still doubtful of victory. The adjourned meeting, held on the 20th of December, was still more numerously attended than the preceding. A change in the designation of some of the members will be observed. In the interval, the first municipal elections under the Charter of Incorporation had taken place, and the great majority of the Town Council consisted of free traders. It was to be seen by that day's trial whether the Chamber of Commerce was or was not to be brought into unison of opinion and sentiment with the public and the new corporation, and whether the stand-still graduality of Mr. George W. Wood, member of Parliament, or the entire and immediate free-trade policy of Mr. Richard Cobden, alderman, was to prevail.

The President, who seems to have considered that as the main objections to his petition (for he acknowledged the paternity) had been directed to its concluding prayer, had prepared one, earnestly conjuring the honourable house that the existing Corn Laws might be repealed; but the use of the word "existing," still leaving the inference to be drawn that the chamber would sanction some other law, was unacceptable to the more decided reformers of commercial legislation. Mr. J. C. Dyer pressed for a decided declaration of opinion, and said that the moderators and *juste-milieu* men were mischievously obstructive to the introduction of a wise and just policy. Mr. Alderman Cobden reiterated his disappointment that the directors had not incorporated some of the facts that had been stated at the previous discussion, without which the arguments in the petition would have no more weight, however

ingeniously urged, than a thesis drawn up by some tyro in political economy at a university. "Why," he asked in allusion to the discontent of the dense working population which had begun alarmingly to manifest itself, "why were incendiaries enabled to get up their torch-light meetings? People did not quit comfortable homes, containing good beds, and furniture, and tables with something to spread upon them, to attend out-of-door night meetings. No, there were causes for those evils, and it behoved them to represent strongly what those causes were, and to warn the legislature of the dangers that were hanging over them. Surely it behoved them to read the signs of the times. If their trade should be ruined, this neighbourhood must become the theatre where a fearful tragedy would be enacted,—which it became their duty and their interest to avert, by a timely effort to repeal the Corn Law." In accordance with these views, he had prepared a petition, which he would read, and leave it in the hands of the meeting :—

"To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain and Ireland, in Parliament assembled :—

"The Petition of the President, Vice-President, Directors, and Members of the Chamber of Commerce and Manufactures of Manchester, agreed to in a Special General Meeting, held on the 20th day of December, 1838,

"Humbly sheweth,

"That your petitioners deem it their imperative duty to call the immediate attention of your honourable house to the consideration of the existing laws affecting the free importation of food.

"That your petitioners would premise that you are already acquainted with the nature and extent of the cotton trade ; combining, as it does, a larger amount of capital, with greater enterprise and skill, and giving more extensive and better regulated employment than any other branch of manufacturing industry. This source of increasing population and wealth, which is now become essential to our well-being as a nation, owes no sort of allegiance to the soil of England ; and if it has grown up with a rapidity unparalleled in the annals of trade, history affords us many examples to show how speedily it may, by misgovernment, be banished to other shores.

“That your petitioners view, with great alarm, the rapid extension of foreign manufactures, and they have in particular to deplore the consequent diminution of a profitable trade with the continent of Europe; to which, notwithstanding the great increase of population since the termination of the war, the exports have actually been less in value during the last five years after the peace; and whilst the demand for all those articles in which the greatest amount of the labour of our artisans is comprised has been constantly diminishing, the exportation of the raw materials has been as rapidly increasing.

“That several nations of the continent not only produce sufficient manufactures for their own consumption, but they successfully compete with us in neutral foreign markets. Amongst other instances that might be given to show the formidable growth of the cotton hosiery of Saxony, of which, owing to its superior cheapness, nearly four times as much is exported as from this country, the Saxons exported annually to the United States of America alone, a quantity equal to the exports from England to all parts of the world; whilst the still more important fact remains to be adduced, that Saxon hose, manufactured from English yarn, after paying a duty of twenty per cent., are beginning to be introduced into this country, and sold for home consumption at lower prices than they can be produced for by our own manufacturers.

“That further proof of the rapid progress in manufacturing industry going on upon the continent is afforded in the fact that establishments for the making of all kinds of machinery for spinning and weaving cotton, flax, and wool, have lately been formed in nearly all the large towns of Europe, in which skilled English artisans are at the present moment diligently employed in teaching the native mechanics to make machines copied from models of the newest inventions of this country; and not a week passes in which individuals of the same class do not quit the workshops of Manchester, Leeds, and Birmingham, to enter upon similar engagements abroad.

“That the superiority we have hitherto possessed in our unrivalled roads and canals is no longer peculiar to this country; railroads to a great extent, and at a less cost than in England, are proceeding in all parts of Europe and the United States of America; whilst, from the want of profitable investments at home, capital is constantly seeking employment in foreign countries, and thus supplying the greatest deficiency under which our rivals previously laboured.

“That, whilst calling the attention of your honourable house to facts calculated to excite the utmost alarm for the well-being of our manufacturing prosperity, your petitioners cannot too earnestly make known that the evils are occasioned by our impolitic and unjust legislation, which, by preventing the British manufacturer from exchanging the



produce of his labour for the corn of other countries, enables our foreign rivals to purchase their food at one-half the price at which it is sold in this market; and your petitioners declare it to be their solemn conviction that this is the commencement only of a state of things, which, unless arrested by a timely repeal of all protective duties upon the importation of corn and all foreign articles of subsistence, must eventually transfer our manufacturing industry into other and rival countries.

“That, deeply impressed with such apprehensions, your petitioners cannot look with indifference upon, nor conceal from your honourable house, the perilous condition of those surrounding multitudes whose subsistence from day to day depends upon the prosperity of the cotton trade. Already the million have raised the cry for food. Reason, compassion, and sound policy demand that the excited passions be allayed, otherwise evil consequences may ensue. The continuance of the loyal attachment of the people to the established institutions of the country can never be permanently secured on any other grounds than those of commercial justice. Holding one of those eternal principles to be—the inalienable right of every man freely to exchange the results of his labour for the productions of other people; and maintaining the practice of protecting one part of the community at the expense of all other classes to be unsound and unjustifiable, your petitioners earnestly implore your honourable house to repeal all laws relating to the importation of foreign corn and other foreign articles of subsistence; and to carry out to the fullest extent, both as affects agriculture and manufactures, the true and peaceful principles of *free trade*, by removing all existing obstacles to the unrestricted employment of industry and capital.—And your petitioners, &c.

In further enforcing the necessity of a clear expression of opinion by the chamber, Mr. Cobden said it was desirable that Mr. Poulett Thomson should be left in no doubt as to the wishes of his constituents, and confessed his belief that that gentleman, whilst representing the free traders of Manchester, had attempted less than Mr. Huskisson had done while representative of the monopoly interests of the old borough of Liverpool. Mr. R. H. Greg (afterwards one of the members for the borough) seconded the motion for the adoption of Mr. Cobden's petition; and when a man of his character and intelligence, and at the same time one of the most extensive spinners and manufacturers of the country, spoke of the possibility of being



obliged to carry his capital and skill to foreign lands, from the belief that the repeal of the Corn Law had been so long delayed that the country must gradually sink into utter ruin without an instant change, a great impression was produced on the assembly. Mr. Smith spoke at great length, and as effectively as if he had sat at the feet of the great economist whose name he bore. Mr. William Rawson rendered good service also, by his illustrations drawn from the state of the Nottingham stocking trade, in which he was engaged. After some little discussion between the President and Mr. Cobden, about the conduct of Mr. Poulett Thomson, the latter put Mr. Cobden's motion as an amendment, and it was carried almost unanimously, there being only four or five hands held up against it. The result was received with loud cheering. In my paper of the 22nd of December, I said of this meeting :—" The Chamber of Commerce has aroused itself from its seven years' sleep. The proceedings of the meeting last week have engrossed so large a share of public interest, as to have almost thrown into the shade the proceedings of our corporation elections. The adjourned meeting on Thursday last was even more crowded than the former, and our readers will perceive, from our very extended report, that the debates were not less interesting or important. The facts stated by the different speakers, coming as they did from some of the most intelligent of our merchants and manufacturers, appeared to make an impression on the chamber such as we have never before witnessed in any assembly, and we are confident that they cannot fail to produce a similar feeling throughout the whole manufacturing and commercial community of this kingdom. Here were assembled our most eminent merchants, manufacturers, and spinners, who, after a debate of five hours, at their first meeting, adjourned their discussion for a week, to give time for reflection and consideration upon the course which they should pursue, and then after another

debate of five hours duration, solemnly, for no other term will convey to our readers so correctly the deep interest manifested by the chamber during the whole of their protracted sittings, declaring, by a majority of at least six to one, that the great and peaceful principles of free trade, on the broadest scale, was the only security for the welfare of every portion of the community."

The effect of the outward pressure upon the chamber, gave some promise that a continuance of the pressure might not be ineffectual when directed upon parliament. Personally, I greatly rejoiced in the prospect of an effective expression of public opinion, for I had sometimes despaired of being able to excite it. I was compelled to be an agitator when agitators were scarce. It had always been an effort with me to overcome my reluctance to take part in public meetings. I rejoiced to see that my voice on this great question would not be needed, except, perhaps, as an occasional and humble substitute for some one of the popular leaders who were rising up. But I resolved that my pen should allow no landlord fallacy to appear unanswered, and that my newspaper should be devoted to record the proceedings of the new movement—not as its organ, but as an independent coadjutor in the good work. Hence an occupation of space for eight years, more probably than any weekly newspaper ever devoted to a single object. During that long struggle I was often told that it would be more to my interest if I made the *Manchester Times* more of a newspaper. It mattered not. If journalism was not to effect public good it was not the employment for me; and now, at the end of fourteen years, calmly looking back upon the past, I not only do not regret the course which I took, but am deeply thankful that no temptation induced me to swerve from a straightforward, and, as I believed, a righteous purpose.

## CHAPTER VII.

### PROGRESS.

In his "Cobden et la Ligue," M. Frederic Bastiat, in reference to the object of the originators of the Anti-Corn-Law movement, says: "Certainly there needed more than ordinary courage to face such an enterprise. The adversaries to be combatted were in possession of riches, influence, the legislature, the church, the state, the public treasure, the soil, places, and monopolies; and they were walled around by traditional deference and veneration. But the aspect of these difficulties did not frighten the founders of the League. After having looked them in the face and measured their strength, they believed they had strength to conquer them. The agitation was decided upon, and Manchester was the cradle of the grand movement." The preparations, in the commencement of 1839, for the struggle with so much and so long-continued power, showed that the free traders were fully aware that no ordinary sacrifice of time and money and labour would be required to give them any chance of victory.

On the 10th of January, 1839, a meeting was held at the York Hotel, "to consider the proper mode of carrying forward the proceedings of the Anti-Corn-Law Association in a manner commensurate with the magnitude of the obstacles to be surmounted, and worthy of the object for which it has been established." Mr. Holland Hoole, a conservative, on being called to the chair, said he stood

there as the representative of all the people in his employment, for they, as well as himself, were threatened with destruction by the operation of the Corn Laws. Mr. J. B. Smith said that to give force to petitions presented to Parliament, it was necessary that the people should assume an attitude that would demand attention to their prayers. The course should be followed which was taken to rescind the noted orders in Council in 1812; deputations should be sent to London from every part of the country, and the demand ought to be heard at the bar of the House of Commons. Mr. R. H. Greg recommended the same course, and urged the meeting to show its earnestness by contributing the means of supporting an energetic movement. Mr. Alderman Shuttleworth took a general view of the mischiefs inflicted by the landowners' monopoly. Mr. Alderman Cobden recommended an investment of a part of the property of the gentlemen present to save the rest from confiscation.

The Chairman said that though young in business he would put down £50. (Cheers.)

Mr. J. B. Smith would give £100, and he was commissioned to put down Mr. Shuster's name for £100. (Cheers.)

Alderman Cobden said he would give £100. (Cheers.)

Mr. Novelli would also give £100. (Cheers.)

Mr. James Kershaw would give £100. (Cheers.)

Mr. Alderman Brooks would give £100. (Cheers.)

Mr. J. C. Dyer would give £100 most cheerfully, and £1,000 more if it were wanted. (Cheers.)

Mr. W. Rawson said he could only give £50 now, but would give half of all he possessed, if it were needed. (Cheers.)

Before leaving the room, the chairman announced that the subscriptions had reached £1,800. On the following Saturday the resolutions and subscriptions were thus advertised:—

“Moved by J. B. Smith, Esq., seconded by R. H. Greg, Esq.,

“That this meeting, feeling deeply and solemnly convinced that the foreign commerce of the country, upon which the welfare of all classes of our manufacturing population depends, is threatened with impendent

danger, from which it cannot be preserved unless the duties upon foreign corn and all other articles of food be immediately abolished.

“RESOLVED,—That a subscription be forthwith commenced, for the purpose of carrying forward the proceedings of the Anti-Corn-Law Association, in a manner commensurate with the obstacles to be surmounted, and worthy of the vitally important object for which it has been established.

“On the motion of P. Novelli, Esq., seconded by J. C. Dyer, Esq.,

“RESOLVED,—That the following gentlemen constitute a finance committee, for the purpose of receiving the money now subscribed; and that they may be empowered to solicit further pecuniary aid in the neighbourhood, in the name of this meeting:—

J. B. Smith, Esq.	Mr. Alderman Shuttleworth.
Mr. Alderman Cobden.	J. C. Dyer, Esq.
Mr. Alderman Kershaw.	R. H. Greg, Esq.
Mr. Alderman Callender.	Holland Hoole, Esq.

“On the motion of James Chapman, Esq., seconded by William Evans, Esq.,

“RESOLVED,—That the gentlemen now composing the Provisional Committee of the Manchester Anti-Corn-Law Association, a list of whose names appeared in several Manchester newspapers on the 29th of December, and the gentlemen present, not included in the list, be one General Committee, with power to add to their number, for the management of the Anti-Corn-Law Association, subject to the resolutions already passed of such Provisional Committee.

The following amounts were announced:—

The Mayor of Manchester..	£100	Messrs. Evans and Nicholson	£50
J. B. Smith, Esq. ....	100	Messrs. Lambert, Hoole, Jack-	
Mr. Alderman Callender ..	100	son, and Co. ....	50
Leo Shuster, Esq. ....	100	Messrs. J. R. Barnes & Sons	50
Alderman Kershaw.....	100	James Chadwick, Esq. ....	50
P. Novelli, Esq. ....	100	Messrs. Burgess & Townsend	50
Mr. Alderman Cobden ....	100	Abraham Smith, Esq. ....	50
Mr. Alderman Brooks.....	100	Messrs. J. Thomasson & Son	50
R. H. Greg, Esq. ....	100	Messrs. Benj. Smith & Sons	50
Messrs. H. and C. Ashworth	100	Messrs. Bannerman & Grafton	50
Messrs. Mc.Connell and Co.	100	William Rawson, Esq. ....	50
Messrs. Simpson, Rostron,		Messrs. James Hall & Co. ..	50
and Co. ....	100	Daniel Lee, Esq. ....	50
J. C. Dyer, Esq. ....	100	Elkanah Armitage, Esq. ...	50



On Saturday, January 19th, the following additional subscriptions were announced :—

Messrs. Thomson Brothers..£100	S. D. Darbishire, Esq..... £50
Robert Stuart, Esq..... 100	Eccles Shorrocks, Esq..... 50
Oxford Road Twist Company 100	Messrs. S. Schwabe & Co. .. 50
Messrs. S. Stocks & Co..... 100	Messrs. Adam Roxburgh & Co. 50
Messrs. John Munn & Co... 100	Henry Hilton, Esq. .... 50
Messrs. J. & N. Philips & Co. 100	Messrs. N. P. Nathan & Co.. 50
Messrs. A. & S. Henry & Co. 100	Messrs. J. P. Rayner & Brother 50
Messrs. Roberts & Walton.. 50	Messrs. J. & J. Walker..... 50
Isaac Hudson, Esq. .... 50	Messrs. Schunck, Suchay & Co. 50
Messrs. H. Bannerman and Sons ..... 50	Messrs. Gisborne & Wilson.. 50
Messrs. John Dugdale & Brs. 50	Messrs. Reiss & Brother .... 50
Messrs. Dufay & Co. .... 50	Messrs. Simon & Co..... 50
John Owens, Esq. .... 50	James Carlton, Esq..... 50

And fifteen others, £20 each; fourteen, at £10 each; and thirteen, at £5 each; increasing the amount to upwards of £4,105.

On Saturday, January 26th, the following additional subscriptions were announced :—

Messrs. Hargreaves & Dugdale ..... £100	Thomas Ashton, Esq. .... £50
Messrs. George Cheetham & Son ..... 100	Messrs. Bannister, Eccles, & Co. .... 50
Messrs. Ashbury, Critchley, & Co. .... 50	Messrs. Samuel Matley & Son 50
Messrs. James Burt & Son.. 50	Messrs. Wood & Wright .... 50
Jacob Bright, Rochdale .... 50	Messrs. Jas. Maclaren & Co. 50
	Henry Wadkin, Esq. .... 50
	Messrs. Harvey, Tysoe, & Co. 50

And one, at £30; two, at £25 each; twelve, at £20 each; fourteen, at £10 each; and five, at £5 each.

By Saturday, February 9th, the following additional subscriptions had been received :—

Messrs. S. Lees & Co..... £100	Messrs. J. S. & J. Watts .... £50
Messrs. Fort, Brothers, & Co. 100	Messrs. Reddish, Brooks, & Co. .... 50
Messrs. Smith & Rawson .. 50	Messrs. Nelson, Knowles, & Co. .... 50
Messrs. Potter & Ross .... 50	
Messrs. Jos. Smith & Sons.. 50	

And one at £30; one at £25; four at £20 each; eight at £10 each; and twelve, at £5 each; making the total, with sundry smaller subscriptions, into the sum of £6,136. 10s.

An ungenerous use has been made of the avowal of many contributors to the funds of the League, that they felt that their own interests would be promoted, as if they were influenced solely by selfishness. Happy it is when the interest of a class is the interest of the whole community! The producers of corn—or rather the owners of land from which corn is produced—wished, for their own profit, to tax the whole of the consumers, agricultural as well as commercial and manufacturing. To them the charge of selfishness might fairly be applied. It could not be justly applied to those who asked only to be released from an unjust exaction. When the manufacturers of Lancashire, Yorkshire, and Lanarkshire, demanded this right, they demanded what would be a much greater benefit to the hundreds of thousands whom they employed. To the former it was a question of diminished profits, or a change in the employment of capital, or a change in the locality of that employment,—to the latter it was a question of life or death—of fair employment at fair wages or absolute starvation. Each of the former could truly say:—"If I am benefitted, a hundred others will be more benefitted." This was the answer to the cry simultaneously, and suspiciously because simultaneously, raised—for it argued a compact between the chartists and the protectionists. I will not assert the unmixed benevolence of all who gave their money and their labour to the movement. If I did, I should be claiming what they did not claim for themselves. They did not sound a trumpet and proclaim themselves, as others did, the "poor man's friends." What they said was that their interests and the interests of the community were identical. What they asked of the working man was, to help them for his own benefit—for his own rescue from starvation. And yet, while they thus abstained from the claim of being actuated by unmixed benevolence, I have seen the tears run down the cheeks of many a manly countenance, when the great employer spoke of the

wretched condition of hundreds and thousands who looked to him for employment when none was to be had.

While Manchester was bracing itself up for the fight, indications were given in other places of the sort of opposition with which the new movement would be encountered. At Leeds a great meeting was held on the 15th January, rendered still more numerous by the announcement that Mr. Feargus O'Connor would attend "to vindicate the rights of labour," which brought the Chartists in great numbers to support their champion, and it was found necessary to adjourn to the Coloured Cloth Hall, where between seven to eight thousand persons soon congregated. The Mayor was called to the chair; Mr. Alderman Goodman moved, and Mr. Alderman Williams seconded a resolution against all restrictions on the interchange of nations as unjust in principle, impolitic, and injurious. Mr. O'Connor designated the movement as one intended only to give the manufacturers power to lower the wages of their workmen, and moved a resolution that, although restrictions on trade were injurious, no salutary alterations could be made until those for whose benefit the change was contemplated were fully represented in Parliament. Great confusion ensued, amidst which Mr. Thomas Plint stood forward with the *Mirror of Parliament* in his hand, and having read some extracts in which O'Connor had spoken against the repeal of the Corn Laws, exclaimed: "Here is a man who now assents to the proposition that there should be no restrictions on commerce, and yet only four years ago he maintained that such a principle would be ruinous to the country." Here a cry came from the crowd: "What have we to do with his consistency?" "What!" said Mr. Plint, "have you nothing to do with it? I should like to know what better criterion you have of a man's principles than his past actions. If he is unable to give a full and satisfactory explanation of his change of opinion he is unworthy of your confidence." Great con-

fusion again prevailed, amidst which O'Connor was heard to tell the meeting, that "if he lived, by the blessing of God, they would have universal suffrage;" but his hearers seemed to think that they would be none the worse, in the mean time, of food at its natural price, for on a show of hands his amendment was lost, and the original resolution carried by three to one.

At Leeds a chartist was the obstructive; at Liverpool it was a tory who opposed himself to the new movement. At the latter great town a very numerous meeting was held; the Mayor (Hugh Hornby, Esq.) in the chair. The first resolution in favour of free trade, proposed by Mr. T. Thornerly, M.P. for Wolverhampton, and seconded by Mr. Christopher Rawdon, was carried with a few dissentients. The second, on the injurious operation of the Corn Laws, was proposed by Mr. Henry Booth, seconded by Mr. James Molineux. Mr. Duncan Gibb, in opposition, said that the effect of the Corn Laws had been to keep up the price of labour. This was received with loud laughter. He went on to say that the high wages consequent upon the operation of the Corn Laws had the effect of enabling a man to earn what allowed him something to spare for the luxuries as well as the necessaries of life. In conclusion Mr. Gibb read a long amendment to the effect that the Corn Laws were just, convenient, politic, and salutary, and that it would be highly inexpedient to alter them. The original resolution was supported by Mr. Ottiwell Wood, then he said in his seventy-ninth year, Mr. John Smith, Mr. Walmsley (now Sir Joshua), and Mr. Rathbone, and was carried by a great majority.

The Manchester Association having resolved upon a public dinner invited the attendance of a number of members of Parliament, who, in the previous session, had voted in favour of Mr. Villiers' motion for the repeal of the Corn Law; and of delegates from associations which had sprung up in various parts of the kingdom; and it

was then seen that numerous important towns were ready to join in a great mutual effort. The assemblage, consisting of eight hundred persons, took place in the Corn Exchange, on Wednesday, 22nd January. The following members of Parliament and others were present, seated at the principal table :—

C. P. Villiers, Wolverhampton.	Sir William Molesworth, Leeds.
Josh. Scholefield, Birmingham.	Henry Marsland, Stockport.
Peter Ainsworth, Bolton.	John Easthope, Leicester.
John Fort, Clitheroe.	Joseph Brotherton, Salford.
William Clay, Tower Hamlets.	Richard Walker, Bury.
Francis Finch, Walsall.	J. T. Leader, Westminster.
Colonel Sawley, Ludlow.	T. B. Hobhouse, Rochester.
Col. Thompson, late M.P. for Hull.	William Ewart, late M.P.
Dr. Bowring, late M.P. for Kilmarnock.	Thos. Potter, Mayor of Manchester.
	R. H. Greg, Esq.

At the table running down the centre of the room, reserved for strangers and delegates from distant towns, were :—

G. Cookman, Mayor of Hull.	Walmsley and Bolton, Liverpool.
The Mayor of Bolton.	Weir and Johnstone, Glasgow.
The Mayor of Lancaster, with Satterthwaite, Higgin, & Hinde.	The Mayor of Leeds, with H. Stanfield, T. Flint, and Edward Baines, jun.
Hon. Erskine Murray, Edin.	J. and W. Walker, and T. and G. Wynn, Wolverhampton.
William Briggs, Esq., Leicester.	Segar, Ascroft, and Barlow, Preston.
R. Bradley, J. Sands, and Kelley, Nottingham.	The Master Cutler, of Sheffield.
Coppock, Nelstrop, and Hudson, Stockport.	J. Spear Heron, Wigan.
Thomas Eskrigge, Warrington.	

Letters were read from a number of members of Parliament, unable to attend, but expressing their approval of the movement. One from the Earl of Durham, who, in 1815, had moved an amendment on the Corn Bill then passed, excited enthusiastic cheering. The chairman of the Manchester Anti-Corn-Law Association, Mr. John B. Smith, was, appropriately, the chairman for the evening. The first toast was, " Our Queen, Duchess of Lancaster ;



may she long reign over an industrious people, unshackled by Corn Laws, or any other monopoly." The next, "The total and unconditional repeal of the Corn and Provision Laws," was received in a manner which proved that the assembled delegates were, like those whose guests they were, fully prepared to throw all compromise overboard. The report of the proceedings, and of the subsequent meetings, occupied nearly sixteen closely printed columns of my paper, then one of the largest folio; and those columns, thus devoted, contained as much matter as would fill several sheets of this volume. The speech of the chairman was short, but to the purpose, and showed that he was worthy of the seat in parliament, which he afterwards attained. The same may be said of that delivered by the next speaker, Mr. R. H. Greg—afterwards one of the members for Manchester—who, however, spoke at greater length. He concluded by proposing, "The mover and seconder of the motion for the repeal of the Corn Laws, in March, 1838—Mr. Villiers and Sir Wm. Molesworth." Mr. Villiers had entitled himself to the respect of Manchester before he had appeared in it, and now his appearance, at once intellectual and gentlemanly, the tone of his address, the knowledge of his subject, the closeness of his argumentation, his obvious determination to persevere in the course he had undertaken, and the hopefulness of his expectation that the struggle would end in victory, confirmed his hearers in their belief that he possessed high qualifications to be the leader in the parliamentary contest. Sir William Molesworth, although he excited less enthusiasm, spoke well, and gave evidence of a firm determination to bear his share in the movement. And then the worthy Mayor of Manchester, Thomas Potter, albeit unused to public speaking, came forward amidst the enthusiastic cheering to which his private beneficence and public spirit well entitled him, and, as a farmer's son and a Manchester merchant, denounced the Corn Laws as

injurious alike to the farmer and the manufacturer, and the labourers and operatives they employed. He proposed, "The gentlemen who voted in the minority on Mr. Villiers' motion." This drew out Mr. Brotherton, who was not the less effective that he did not attempt to be oratorical. Mr. Holland Hoole proposed, "The manufacturing and agricultural classes; may their mutual interests be a bond of union between them." On this, Mr. Clay spoke; asserting that the interest of the landowners would be more promoted by encouraging a more careful cultivation of the soil than by protection.

And here let us advert, for a moment, to a remark of Miss Martineau in her "History of England during the thirty years' peace," in reference to the Anti-Corn-Law agitators. She says: "They set to work with a zeal, a knowledge, a pertinacity, and a spirit of self-sacrifice, probably unequalled in the history of peaceful agitation. When their work was done, and they looked back upon its beginning, they were surprised to find *how little they themselves knew* when they first devoted themselves to the cause. *The deepest of them* had scarcely an idea how closely the interest of the agriculturists were involved in the establishment of a free trade in food, and how society was injured through all its ramifications by an artificial restriction in the first article of human necessity." No doubt the various bearings of the question became better understood the more it was discussed; but I can aver that, from the very commencement of the agitation, the mutual dependance of agricultural and manufacturing interests had been made a strong point by the advocates of free commerce. It was so at all the meetings in Manchester, from the time of Dr. Bowring's visit in September to the meeting of the Chamber of Commerce, in December, 1838; at that meeting it bore a prominent part in the discussion; and at this great meeting in January, 1839, almost every speaker adverted to it. Probably Miss Mar-

tineau's mistake arose from the frequent denunciation of landlord selfishness in taxing the whole community to keep up rents ; but there was, even from the beginning, a distinction drawn between the interest of the landlord and that of the general agricultural body.

We return to the meeting : Mr. James Kershaw having expressed his trust that, whilst remembering their particular interests as spinners, calico printers, as merchants, as manufacturers, or *as farmers*, they would never forget the interests of the working many, proposed " A cheap loaf for the people," which was responded to by Mr. Leader, who, believing that the Corn Laws were reducing the manufacturers to ruin, and the working classes to starvation, and not seeking any injury to the agricultural interest, pledged himself to use every effort to obtain their repeal. Justice was then done to a veteran in the cause of free trade, and the grateful task was appropriately assigned to another veteran of a kindred spirit. Mr. J. C. Dyer proposed " The health of the author of the *Anti-Corn-Law Catechism*—Colonel Thompson." The gallant colonel was not known as a public speaker. Six years before he did not believe that he could ever be a public speaker. He was a candidate for the representation of Preston after the passing of the Reform Bill, and all that Dr. Bowring and I could say as to the necessity of his going to address the constituency was unavailing, such was his belief that he was unable to speak before a great mixed assemblage. I was told that his friends had, with great difficulty, persuaded him that he had the power of writing things worthy to be printed. He now proved that he was capable of uttering as well as writing pithy argument, and of slaying fallacies as trenchantly by speech as by pen. " The Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association," called up Mr. Johnstone, afterwards member of Parliament for Kilmarnock, who was amongst the first who attained a seat there after the agitation, mainly for the advocacy of free-trade principles.

"Peace and free trade with all the world," was appropriately replied to by Dr. Bowring, whose visit in the previous September had given rise to the association, now meeting in such strength and with such coadjutors. After short speeches from Mr. Ainsworth and Mr. Ewart, the company separated, not, however, without adding considerably to the fund, more than £600 having been subscribed in the room.

On the following day, a meeting of the delegates was held in the York Hotel, Mr. Smith in the chair. Mr. Cobden said that the members of the Manchester Association had thought it desirable that the various associations throughout the kingdom should act together, and read the following resolutions, which were submitted to the consideration of the assembled delegates:—

"Resolved—1. That this meeting of representatives from all the great sections of our manufacturing and commercial population, solemnly declare it to be their conviction that the prosperity of the great staples upon which their capital and industry are employed, is in imminent danger from the operation of the laws which interdict or interfere with the exchange of their productions for the corn and other produce of foreign nations, and thus check our trade, and artificially enhance the price of food in this country; and believing that the facts upon which this judgment is formed are little known, and of such national importance as to call for their disclosure before the people's representatives, they earnestly recommend that petitions be immediately forwarded from all parts of the kingdom, praying to be heard by counsel and evidence at the bar of the House of Commons in the approaching session of Parliament."

"2. That in order to secure unity and efficiency of action, this meeting recommends that delegates be appointed by the several Anti-Corn-Law Associations of the kingdom, to assemble as a Central Board, in London, at the opening of Parliament; to whom shall be entrusted, amongst other business, the duty of obtaining the services of such members as may be inclined to urge their cause with efficiency in Parliament; and in the meantime the meeting impresses upon all those local bodies, the necessity of immediately collecting and arranging their evidence, and placing it at the disposal of the Central Board. Those manufacturing and commercial towns not already possessing



such societies are earnestly recommended to form **Anti-Corn-Law** Associations; and, in case they require information or advice, they are invited to put themselves immediately in correspondence with the Manchester Association, whose fundamental rule, prohibiting the discussion of any party or political topics, is especially recommended for the adoption of all similar bodies elsewhere."

"3. That the agricultural proprietor, capitalist, and labourer are benefited equally with the trader, by the creation and circulation of the wealth of the country; and this meeting appeals to all those classes to co-operate for the removal of a monopoly which, by restricting the foreign commerce of the country, retards the increase of population, and restrains the growth of towns; thus depriving them of the manifold resources to be derived from the augmenting numbers and wealth of the country."

"4. That this meeting cannot separate without expressing its deep sympathy with the present privations of that great and valuable class of their countrymen who earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brow; many of whom are now suffering from hunger in the midst of boundless fields of employment, rendered unproductive solely by those unjust laws which prevent the exchange of the products of their industry for the food of other countries. So long as a plentiful supply of the first necessities of life is denied by acts of the British legislature to the great body of the nation, so long will the government and the country be justly exposed to all the evils resulting from the discontent of the people. With a view to avert so great a danger by an act of universal justice, this meeting pledges itself to a united, energetic, and persevering effort for the total and immediate repeal of all laws affecting the free importation of grain."

"5. That the delegates appointed for the furtherance of the objects of this work by the different Anti-Corn-Law associations and towns, be advised to assemble at Brown's Hotel, Palace Yard, Westminster, at twelve o'clock on Monday the 4th of February."

Mr. William Weir, a member of the Scottish bar, then editor of the *Glasgow Argus*, who had suggested that the agitation should take the course which had been successful in causing the repeal of the Orders in Council, stated that the petition from Glasgow for the total repeal of the Corn Laws had, in a few days, been signed by 80,000 persons, and that the number would probably be doubled. The association there would take nothing short of repeal. Mr.



Boulton, of Birmingham, argued that money saved by the reduction of the price of bread would be spent in the purchase of other agricultural produce. Colonel Thompson promised the aid of the London Association. Mr. A. Prentice said that a petition, signed by 22,000 persons, had been sent from Manchester on the previous year, and yet their right honourable representative was complaining that his constituents were not urgent in the matter. The Hon. J. Erskine Murray said that although no association had been formed at Edinburgh, there had been a meeting there attended by 2,000 persons, all for total repeal. Mr. Walmesley, of Liverpool, said that at the meeting there, resolutions in favour of total repeal had been carried by fifty to one. The Mayor of Leeds stated that the petition agreed upon at a public meeting, praying for total repeal, had received 15,000 signatures, Mr. Thomas Bolton, of Liverpool, promised that the members for that borough should be urged to vote for repeal. Mr. Walker, of Wolverhampton, the Mayor of Lancaster, Mr. Plint, of Leeds, Mr. B. Pearson, Mr. W. Rawson, Dr. Bowring, the Mayor of Bolton, myself, and others, all spoke in favour of immediate repeal, some of them urging as a reason against a gradual reduction, that it would be most ruinous to the farmers. The resolutions were agreed to unanimously.

In the evening of the same day an adjourned meeting, or "dessert" as it was called, was held in the Corn Exchange. The first toast given was "The eloquent and indefatigable advocate of the repeal of the Corn Laws, Mr. Paulton, of Bolton." Mr. Paulton stated that he had lectured in seven counties, and addressed upwards of 80,000 persons, and he conceived, from what he had experienced of the popular feelings, that the alleged unwillingness of the working classes to join in the movement, was not borne out by facts. The meeting was subsequently addressed by Mr. Ewart, M.P., Mr. George Wynn, Mr. Alderman Brooks, Mr. Erskine Murray, Mr. William

Rawson, Colonel Thompson, Mr. Henry Ashworth, Mr. William Weir, Dr. Bowring, and myself.

A meeting of the Manchester Association was held in Newall's Buildings, on the 28th of January, J. B. Smith, Esq., in the chair, at which it was resolved :—

“ 1. That the association be called ‘The Manchester Anti-Corn-Law Association,’ and its object is hereby declared to be, to obtain by all legal and constitutional means, such as the formation of local Anti-Corn-Law Associations, the delivery of lectures, the distribution of tracts, the insertion of articles in the public papers, and forwarding petitions to Parliament, the total and immediate repeal of the corn and provision laws.”

“ 2. No party political discussions shall, on any account be allowed at any of the general or committee meetings of the association; nor shall any resolution be proposed, or subject entertained which shall be at variance with the declared object of the association.”

“ 3. Every person who shall pay in advance an annual subscription shall be a member of the association.”

“ 4. Every person on paying a subscription of five shillings or upwards, per annum, shall receive from the secretary a ticket, which shall entitle the subscriber to attend all general meetings of the association, and to take part in the proceedings of the same.”

“ 5. The management of the officers of the association shall be vested in a council, to consist of a president, vice president, treasurer, and not less than one hundred members, to be chosen by the members out of their own body.”

“ 6. The council shall elect out of its own body an ‘Executive Committee,’ consisting of twelve members, three to be a quorum, and other committees if necessary, whose duty shall be to conduct the business of the association.”

“ 7. The council shall also select out of its own body, a ‘Finance Committee,’ consisting of eight members, three to be a quorum, whose duty shall be to receive all moneys on account of the association, and to pay the same to the treasurer, to examine all accounts and to direct payment by the treasurer.”

“ 8. The president, vice-president, and treasurer of the association shall be, *ex-officio*, members of every committee.”

“ 9. Every committee, at its first meeting, shall appoint out of its own body a chairman and deputy-chairman.”

“ 10. The council shall meet at least once a fortnight, to receive the

reports of the sub-committees, and for the transaction of the general business of the association."

"11. No alteration shall be made in the rules of the association, except at a general meeting of the members, convened for that purpose, of which a week's notice shall be given by public advertisement, in at least two of the Manchester newspapers."

The following gentlemen were appointed of

## THE COUNCIL.

PRESIDENT: J. B. Smith, Esq.

VICE-PRESIDENT; C. J. S. Walker, Esq.

TREASURER: Mr. Alderman Kershaw.

SECRETARY: Mr. John Ballantyne.

Elkanah Armitage.	R. H. Greg.	John Macfarlane.
Joseph Adshead.	H. H. Grounds.	Henry Marsland.
James Ashworth.	Jeremiah Garnett.	Samuel Marsland.
Edw. Ashworth, Bolton.	J. S. Grafton.	Henry Mc.Connell.
J. R. Barnes.	William Goodier.	Thomas Molineux.
Thomas Burgess.	George Hadfield.	F. C. Morton.
Andrew Bannerman.	Edward Hall.	William Nicholson.
Robert Bunting.	James Hampson.	Robert Nicholson.
John Brewer.	Thomas Hopkins.	William Nield.
William Besley.	Joseph Heron.	Aaron Nodal.
John Brooks.	Holland Hoole.	John Naylor.
W. R. Callender.	Isaac Hudson.	Philip Novelli.
James Carlton.	James Hudson.	Joseph Nadin, jun.
James Chapman.	John Hyde.	John Ogden.
Richard Cobden.	Thomas Harbottle.	J. S. Ormerod.
Walter Clarke.	James Howie.	Benjamin Pearson.
Matthew Curtis.	William Harvey.	Robert N. Philips.
James Chadwick.	Alexander Henry.	Thomas Potter.
J. C. Dyer.	John Higson.	Archibald Prentice.
George Dixon.	Thomas Higson.	Jonathan Rawson.
S. D. Darbishire.	Robert Holland.	John Robley.
Peter Eckersley.	James Kershaw.	John Rostron.
Edward Evans.	William Lockett.	William Rawson.
William Evans.	William Lindon.	Henry Rawson.
Richard T. Evans.	William Labrey.	John Shuttleworth.
James Edwards.	F. Lowe.	Jonathan Shaw.
J. G. Frost.	James Murray.	J. B. Scott.
J. H. Fuller.	John Malin.	Thomas Smith.

Stephen Smith.	John Edward Taylor.	George Wilson.
Robert Stuart.	John Whitlow.	C. J. S. Walker.
Abraham Smith.	John Wilkinson.	T. H. Williams.
Samuel Stocks.	Samuel Watts.	Henry Wadkin.
John Standing.	William Woodcock.	P. F. Willert.
Isaac Shimwell.	Absalom Watkin.	W. B. Watkins.
Charles Tysoe.		

## FINANCE COMMITTEE.

Jas. Kershaw, <i>Treasurer</i> .	Thomas Harbottle.	J. C. Dyer.
Richard Cobden.	W. R. Callender.	Edward Hall.
Holland Hoole.	Henry Rawson.	P. F. Willert.

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

Richard Cobden.	W. R. Callender.	Walter Clarke.
Archibald Prentice.	James Chapman.	George Wilson.
William Rawson.	William Evans.	George Dixon.
Edward Hall.	James Howie.	Peter Eckersley.

## PETITION COMMITTEE.

Walter Clarke.	John Blakeman.	Thomas Hopkins.
Edward Hall.	George Smith.	William Goodier.
Samuel Lowcock.	James Naylor.	Aaron Nodal.
Archibald Prentice.	J. S. Ormerod.	Edward Worthington.
Isaac Shimwell.	Henry Rawson.	John Gadsby.
John Bright, Rochdale.	John Standring.	James Howie.
W. Perkins.	George Wilson.	J. Groves.
John Ogden.	Henry Ashworth,	William Lockett.
Matthew Curtis.	Bolton.	Wm. Barratt, Newton.

The Executive Committee of the Manchester Association was afterwards elected to be the Executive Committee of the National Anti-Corn-Law League, and continued its almost daily labours during the seven years' agitation. The death of one of its members, and the removal of the residences of several others, made a change in its constitution, and at the close of the contest the acting committee consisted of:—

William Bickham.	Archibald Prentice.
Richard Cobden.	William Rawson.
W. R. Callender.	Henry Rawson.
William Evans.	George Wilson.
Samuel Lees.	Thomas Woolley.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### DELEGATE MEETING IN LONDON.

London now again became the scene of action. On Monday, February 4th, the delegates appointed at the meetings held in the great manufacturing towns met at Brown's Hotel, with only Palace Yard between them and the House of Commons, whose proceedings they had come to watch. The following was the representation on this occasion :—Manchester : J. B. Smith, R. H. Greg, C. J. S. Walker, W. Rawson, and George Wilson. Bolton : Edmund Ashworth and A. W. Paulton. Liverpool : Joshua Walmsley and J. Aikin. Glasgow : Alexander Johnstone and William Weir. Leeds : Edward Baines, jun., and Hamer Stanfield. Stockport : The Mayor, J. Slack, and the Town Clerk. Kendal : J. Edmondston, W. Wilson, and Alderman Isaac Wilson. Huddersfield : Brook and Shaw. Preston : Parker. Birmingham : Joseph Sturge, Bradford, and E. Edwards. London : Colonel Thompson, W. Weymouth, Dr. Bowring, and M. A. Taylor. The following gentlemen were also present :—C. P. Villiers, M.P. Mr. Thos. Thornely, M.P., and Mr. Ewart, late M.P. for Liverpool.

The resolutions passed at Manchester were approved and confirmed, and it was further resolved that Mr. Villiers should place a notice on the books, at the earliest day



possible, with the view of promoting the object the delegates had in view. The delegates, increased in numbers, met again next morning, and passed a resolution, that, while they demanded a repeal of all restrictions on the importation of articles of subsistence, they were prepared to resign all claims to the protection of home manufacturers. They also resolved to meet from day to day during the discussions on the Corn Laws, and that Mr. Villiers should be invited to include in his motion that evidence be heard at the bar of the house. They then separated to attend the House of Commons at the opening of the parliamentary session.

The Queen's speech made no allusion to the Corn Laws. Mr. E. Buller, the mover of the address in the Commons, admitted the impossibility of sustaining high prices by the existing laws. The seconder, Mr. George William Wood, President of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, in obedience to instructions received from his constituents at Kendal, stated the injurious effects to manufacturers and labourers produced by the exclusion of foreign corn; but, elated by the honour conferred upon him by ministers, he thought he could not well fulfil his mission without adverting to the usual topic of address movers—the prosperity of the country—and in doing so, struck at the then main argument for repeal. “There was something,” said the *London Examiner*, “at once painful and ludicrous in the effect which this part of Mr. Wood's speech produced. The astonishment of the advocates of free trade in the house—the nervous anxiety of the delegates under the gallery—the whispered assurances of the sagacious that ‘Wood was a deep fellow, and would wind it all round before he sat down’—the respectful attention of Sir Robert Peel—the startling applause of the country gentlemen—and the unconscious, earnest, and solemn complacency with which the orator himself continued, brick by brick, to demolish the foundations of the

castle he was commissioned to garrison—made what play writers call ‘a situation,’ that would have been irresistibly droll, if the House of Commons were the Adelphi Theatre, and the Corn Laws a farce, instead of a question involving the interests of millions, and, perhaps, fraught with a fearful tragedy. Sir Robert Peel adroitly availed himself of Mr. Wood’s statements. With cutting irony, he thanked the honourable member for Kendal for the very able speech he had delivered in favour of the existing system, and, with all the art of the practised debater, expressed his hope that the house would pause before it acceded to any propositions which would have the effect of exchanging a law thus proved to be beneficial, and which would materially affect the agricultural interests of this country, having received from the President of the Chamber of Commerce at Manchester the account which had been given them of the *stable and secure* position of our commerce and manufactures!” This was availing himself, with a vengeance, of Mr. Wood’s unfortunate affection for “prosperity” tables; but Mr. Villiers at once cut down both the prosperity statist and the Tamworth baronet, by proofs of the worthlessness of the alleged proofs of an improvement in trade. Mr. Brotherton had previously, in a plain and manly way, contradicted the statements made by Mr. Wood, and shown the mischievous operation of the Corn Laws in diminishing the demand for labour. Lord John Russell left it in doubt whether he leaned to Mr. Villiers or to Sir Robert Peel. He thought the subject of the Corn Laws deserved *investigation*. In the House of Lords, Lord Melbourne gave assurance that he was neither pledged to maintain nor to change the laws.

The delegates met on the following day, at their smaller house of parliament, right across Palace Yard, and expressed themselves in most indignant terms at the statements of Mr. Wood, most of which were successfully and remorselessly demolished by Mr. Smith, Mr. H. Ashworth,

Mr. Greg, and others. At the Friday's meeting it was announced that Lord Melbourne would receive a deputation from the delegates next day—their object being to inform him that the condition of the country was very different from what Mr. Wood represented it to be. On Saturday the chairman reported what had been said to Lord Melbourne on the condition of the country, and a number of members further broke down the statements of Mr. Wood, and the conclusions therefrom adduced by Sir Robert Peel. Mr. Wood was present, and endeavoured to convince the delegates, that, notwithstanding what he had said, he was as anxious for repeal as any of them were. At Monday's and Wednesday's meetings, further and ample proof was given of the injury inflicted by a restrictive commercial policy; and reports of the proceedings appearing in most of the London papers, did much to promote free-trade opinions in the metropolis. Men in "the house" might sneer at the parliament "over the way," but the opinions of the greater assemblage were fated to fall before those of the smaller.

In a week from the Tuesday on which Mr. Wood made his unfortunate speech, the constituency of Kendal, of which he was the representative, and the Chamber of Commerce of Manchester, of which he was the president, had spoken out very plainly. On the Saturday, a public meeting was held in Kendal, and resolutions were passed, strongly condemnatory of his conduct. The following Monday was the day appointed for the annual election of directors of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce. Mr. John Edward Taylor, of the *Guardian* newspaper, moved, and Mr. William Read seconded the following list agreed upon by the directors:—

*John Anderson.*

*Alexander Bannerman.*

*Samuel Fletcher.*

*William Harter.*

*W. Atkinson.*

*Thomas Bazley, jun.*

*Richard Birley.*

*William Gibb.*

*J. C. Prescott.*

*George Sandars.*

*Leo Schuster.*

*John Smith.*

<i>F. R. Hodgson.</i>	<i>Robert Gladstone.</i>	<i>J. B. Smith.</i>
<i>Henry Houldsworth.</i>	<i>John Mc.Vicar.</i>	<i>Henry Tootall.</i>
<i>James Murray.</i>	<i>William Neild.</i>	<i>Thomas Townend.</i>
<i>James Atherton.</i>	<i>Henry Newbery.</i>	<i>Geo. Wm. Wood, M.P</i>

Mr. J. C. Dyer, after stating his desire that the directors should fully represent the opinion of the members upon the great question of free trade, and his opinion that the speech made by Mr. Wood should not appear to have any sanction from that body, moved another list, from which the names marked above in *italics* were omitted, and the following substituted:—

Robert Hyde Greg.	James Burt.	J. C. Dyer.
Richard Cobden.	Richard Roberts.	Henry Ashworth.
Benjamin Pearson.	James Kershaw.	W. R. Callender.
Holland Hoole.	John Cheetham.	Andrew Bannerman.
Henry Mc.Connell.	John Lloyd.	John Spencer.
Joseph Smith.		

Most of the gentlemen proposed to be substituted for the others named, were members of the Anti-Corn-Law Association. Mr. Edmund Ashworth seconded the amendment. Mr. Gibb objected to Mr. Dyer's list, as formed exclusively of persons of one line of politics or of commercial policy. Mr. Dyer denied that in its formation any reference was made to politics, the only object being to secure a directory favourable to the repeal of the Corn Laws. Mr. Read protested, with great warmth, against a choice for one specific purpose. Mr. Cobden was far from wishing the chamber to be actuated by political motives. He wished it to be less subservient than it had been to the government for the time being, and to instruct and compel government to do what the interests of the country required. Mr. J. E. Taylor said that Mr. Wood had spoken in the commons as an individual, not as the president of that chamber. He knew, he said, that Mr. Wood, though in favour of total repeal, would, like himself and Mr. Newbery, be contented to take a small duty for a time. The meeting, however, was not disposed to elect

directors inclined to any compromise, and the amendment was carried, according to the *Guardian's* account, by "a considerable majority," while the *Manchester Times'* report says, "only about twenty hands out of more than a hundred and twenty were held up against it."

While lessons were thus given to professed free traders, there was a teacher amongst the farmers to tell them that *their* interests were not promoted by the Corn Laws. At the invitation of Mr. John Childs, the author of "Corn Law Catechism" visited Bungay, where he addressed an audience of real farmers. Rumours were afloat throughout the locality that he would not be heard, and some of the most brutal of the farmers had boasted loudly of what they would do, if he presumed to instruct them. The threateners went, flushed and prepared for action, but they found that preparations had been made to secure Colonel Thompson a fair hearing, and many who had come to obstruct the proceedings went away convinced that, whatever advantage landowners might derive from the Corn Laws, farmers received none. The gallant Colonel proceeded to Ipswich, where he had a large audience of agriculturists, whom he addressed with great effect. This was the first movement on an agricultural county. The gallant old soldier saw the advantage of carrying the war into the enemy's country, and he set an example that was followed, most effectively, at a later period of the agitation.

On Monday, February 18th, after the presentation of a number of petitions against the Corn Laws, Mr. Villiers moved that they be referred to a committee of the whole house, and that evidence be heard at the bar. The motion was negatived without a division. . On Tuesday, the 19th, Mr. Villiers, after presenting a vast number of additional petitions, brought forward his motion: "That J. B. Smith, Robert Hyde Greg, and others, be heard at the bar of this house, by their witnesses, agents, or counsel, in support of



the allegations of their petition, presented to the house on the 15th instant, complaining of the operations of the Corn Laws." "His speech," says Miss Martineau, "was a statement of singular force and clearness, and the occasion was destined to great celebrity." Mr. Strutt, in seconding the motion, said that his constituents, the silk manufacturers of Derby, had in their petitions declared that they wanted no protection for their own trade if the trade in corn were set free. Sir Francis Burdett, who, when the Corn Law of 1815 was passed, had said that the measure would not affect the interests of the working classes, because if it raised the price of corn their wages also would rise, objected to the waste of time the inquiry would occasion. Mr. Mark Philips thought that one who had been a great advocate of public rights should be the last to allege waste of time when the interests of the great majority of the people were at stake. Mr. C. P. Thomson, his colleague, one of the administration, strongly advocated the inquiry demanded. Lord Stanley could find little better than a stale and offensive joke with which to oppose a motion so much concerning the interests of his constituents. Mr. Brotherton made a manly reply to his lordship. Lord Howick thought the house was ripe for discussion without inquiry. Lord John Russell was of the same opinion; and Sir Robert Peel, stating his belief that the repeal of the Corn Laws would be grossly unjust to the agriculturists, who had to bear heavy peculiar burthens, said he was prepared to give a decided negative to the motion. The House of Commons, in March, 1851, debated eight nights on the motion for the second reading of a bill to prevent Vicars Apostolic calling themselves bishops; in February, 1839, the House of Commons thought one night enough for the discussion of a question affecting the vital interests of millions. The votes for the motion were 172; against it, 361;—and this in a house in which the whigs, professedly the friends of free trade, had yet a preponde-

rating majority. We have not time to inquire, said the majority. No time to inquire, said the Lords on Monday; but on Wednesday they "did not sit." No time to inquire, said the Commons on Tuesday; but meeting at four o'clock on Wednesday, they adjourned at six. The following Lancashire and Cheshire members voted for inquiry :

P. Ainsworth.	John Fenton.	Mark Philips.
J. Brocklehurst.	John Fort.	C. Standish.
J. Brotherton.	Charles Hindley.	E. S. Stanley.
William Fielden.	Swynfen Jervis.	C. P. Thomson.
John Fielden.	General Johnson.	George Wilbraham.
Sir P. H. Hesketh.	Henry Marsland.	

The following voted against the motion :—

W. Bolling.	Sir P. Egerton.	E. J. Stanley.
J. Blackburne.	T. Greene.	Lord Stanley.
C. Cresswell.	T. Grimsditch.	Bootle Wilbraham.
W. T. Egerton.	Viscount Sandon.	

The cabinet ministers in favour of the motion were :—Sir J. C. Hobhouse, Lord Morpeth, and C. P. Thomson. On the opposite side were :—Mr. T. S. Rice (now Lord Monteagle), Lord Palmerston, and Lord John Russell.

The desire to be present during the debate, and to decide on ulterior measures should Mr. Villiers' motion be defeated, added considerably to the number of delegates. On the following morning there was a numerous attendance at Brown's Hotel, including many of the most prominent of the free traders in the metropolis. Many who had hoped that inquiry would not have been denied, loudly expressed their indignation. Others, who had not anticipated the success of the motion, and had seen before them a long contest, were nevertheless excited by the contempt with which the house had treated their petitions, and formed fresh resolution to persevere into the end.

"Among the hopeful speakers," says Miss Martineau, "was Richard Cobden. There was no cause for despondency, he said, because the house over the way refused to hear them. They were the representatives of three mil-

lions of the people—they were the evidence that the great towns had banded themselves together, and their alliance would be a Hanseatic League against the feudal Corn-Law plunderers. The castles which crowned the rocks along the Rhine, the Danube, and the Elbe, had once been the stronghold of feudal oppressors, but they had been dismantled by a League; and they now only adorned the landscape as picturesque memorials of the past, while the people below had lost all fear of plunder, and tilled their vineyards in peace! A public dinner at one of the theatres was offered to the delegates; but they were leaving town. They made no secret of why they were leaving town,—it was to meet again at Manchester. The upholders of the Corn Laws were quite at ease when they no longer saw the train of delegates going down to the house. Yet there were not wanting voices of warning which told them that the matter was not over. While one register of the time tells, with easy satisfaction that the vote of the Commons had the effect of putting the question to rest, and no more was heard of it during the remainder of the session, another is found giving warning, that the departure of the delegates was like the breaking up of a Mahratta camp—the war was not over, but only the mode of attack was about to be changed. There was no secrecy about the new mode of attack. The delegates had offered to instruct the house; the house had refused to be instructed. The house must be instructed; and the way now contemplated was the grandest and most unexceptionable and effectual—it was to be by instructing the nation. The delegates were to meet again at Manchester in a fortnight, to devise their measure of general instruction; which, in its seven years' operation, approached more nearly to a genuine national education than any scheme elsewhere at work. By the Anti-Corn-Law League the people at large were better trained to thought and its communication, to the recognition of principles, the obtaining of facts, and the

application of the same faculties and the same interest to their public as to their private affairs, than by any methods of intellectual development yet tried under the name of education."

The landowners were not all convinced that the day of reckoning was to be long postponed. On Tuesday, February 26th, a number of them mustered in Willis's Rooms, under the designation of "The Central Agricultural Society;" the Earl of Tankerville in the chair, supported by the Earl of Mountcashell, the Earl of Euston, and a host of baronets and members of Parliament. Amongst the speakers were the Chairman, Mr. Montgomery Martin, Mr. Christopher, M.P., Mr. Ormsby Gore, M.P., Mr. Cayley, M.P., and Mr. Alnutt. Their main arguments were, that we had a heavy national debt, that one concession would lead to another, that the agitators were incendiaries and speculators, that farm labourers liked to have wheat at 80s. or 100s., for then they got good wages, and that farmers paid poor rates. Such were the fallacies and falsehoods uttered, and such the fallacies and falsehoods to be printed and circulated throughout the country. A more effectual mode of combating the agitators was resorted to. It was to disturb their meetings by sending upon them some newly found allies of the aristocracy and the soilowners. They knew that they could effect nothing under fair discussion, and the plan was, if possible, to prevent any discussion.

On the following Thursday (Feb. 28th) the Manchester Anti-Corn-Law Association met in the Corn Exchange, to receive a report from the delegates who had been in London. It might have been supposed that the meeting of members of a particular association, held to receive the report of its representatives, would not have been intruded upon by men who were neither of the body nor invited; but it was soon seen that a number of noisy vagabonds had been brought there for the express purpose of disturb-

ing the proceedings. Several members had addressed the meeting, when a person, who has since repented of the course he then took, demanded the right of speaking before a working man named Moore, and because the chairman decided in favour of Moore speaking, proposed to place in the chair one whom he called "honest Pat Murphy," a potato-wheeler in Shudehill, who, whatever his honesty might be, was not very cleanly, and very far from being sober. The scene that followed was unexampled in Manchester, and almost baffled description. Upon the proposer calling out, "will you take the chair, Pat Murphy?" one drunken and very dirty fellow mounted the table, his clogs making deep indentations on its surface, and bruising the reporters hands which were in his way, began to insult every body who asked him to get off, and replied to one who asked him to desist: "D—n thy e'en, if theau spakes to me aw'll put me clogs i' thy chops." The proposer then moved that Pat Murphy take the chair, and cried "Come on Pat." The man was then pushed or dragged over the heads of the people, amidst great noise and confusion, and took his place before Mr. Thomas Harbottle, the chairman. The conclusion of the scene is thus reported:—

"Proposer: 'Gentlemen, three cheers for Stephens'—the cheers were given. 'Three groans for Archibald Prentice'—and the groans were given. Mr. Prentice expressed his thanks for the compliment. 'Gentlemen, three cheers for the National Convention.' (Cheers.) 'Three cheers for Oastler.' (Cheers.) 'Hand up the chair for Pat Murphy.' Some fellows here seized chairs which were in various parts of the room, and threw them at the heads of the persons who stood on the stage. The consequence was that a scene of riot and confusion ensued, several gentlemen being severely hurt by the ruffians, who smashed the forms and glasses of the lamps. The respectable persons of the meeting, with the chairman, then quitted the room, and left it in the possession of the ringleader, who congratulated the meeting upon having done his bidding, and his party, who, we are informed, passed a vote of thanks to the delegates to the National Convention by way of amendment to the original motion."



The business could not have been better done had the Central Agricultural Society paid for the doing. It was seen how easy it was for two or three hundred persons, out of a meeting of two thousand, by noise and clamour, and resort to brute force, to drive away all the peaceably-inclined and respectable; and it was to prevent the recurrence of such tumult and violence that future meetings were confined to members of the association, whose numbers increased so much that it ultimately became necessary to build a hall capable of holding eight thousand persons; and even then there were men who designated the assemblages therein held as "hole and corner" meetings!

On Tuesday, 4th March, the members of the Manchester Anti-Corn-Law Association admitted by ticket, in order that physical-force men might not again interrupt their proceedings, assembled in the Corn Exchange, which was filled on the occasion. On the motion of Mr. Alderman Kershaw, Mr. Harbottle was called to the chair, who said that since the disgraceful outrage at the previous meeting, the Association had received the adhesion of numerous trades, in Manchester, anxious to show that they did not sanction the opposition then offered to its principles. Mr. Cobden, speaking in a tone of indignation, which gave effect to every word he uttered, gave evidence of the power that lay in him, so strikingly manifested in his subsequent energetic and long continued labours. He said:—

"There is nothing I like so much as free discussion, and settling the truth by the test of reason and argument. I shall never flinch from meeting any man, or any body of men, who, as reasonable beings, are disposed to take up the advocacy of the Corn Laws. (Cheers.) But I must protest, in the name of the working classes of Manchester, against the conduct of men who will prevent all discussion upon this important question (hear, hear), and I will venture to say, in the name of the great body of the intelligent, hardworking, respectable men of this town, that they are as deeply disgusted, and feel themselves as much dis-

graced, if they can be disgraced by the conduct of others, as we do, at the men who, in their name, feloniously broke in upon this room, which we had paid for, and violently took possession of property which we were pledged to preserve or to pay for; and then, having driven out those who had paid for the use of the room, took upon themselves to conduct the riotous proceedings you have heard of. ('Shame.') Working men of Manchester, look to yourselves, you, who look to your benefit and sick-clubs, and your trade societies,—look to those men who would take forcible possession of this room, which was occupied by the Anti-Corn-Law Association,—who had upset meetings called to form Parthenons, and other literary associations,—who would make violent inroad upon anti-slavery meetings—these men will take possession of your meetings unless you check them in the bud. (Cheers.) Nay, more: I have no hesitation in saying that even your quiet, happy, and well-regulated firesides will not be safe, unless the strong arm of the law is brought to interfere between you and the wishes of those lawless men, who have no other restraint but the fear of the law and its consequences. (Loud cheers.)”

Mr. Cobden went on to show that the question was emphatically the poor man's question, for it was not wine or luxuries that we wished to have in exchange for our manufactures, but food—the food of the working classes. He asked if ever these classes were prosperous when food was not cheap, and concluded a speech, which produced a great effect upon the working men present, by saying, “We take our stand upon a fixed principle; we say we will have no duty; we will have a total, immediate, and unconditional repeal. We shall go forward in our cause, not turning out of our way to molest others, whatever their object may be, but claiming the right to ourselves, as free citizens, to meet and discuss these questions at all times. And we call for the co-operation of all the honest, hard-working men of this town, to go with us to fight this great battle manfully, and to the end; and whenever they see on our banners one word about compromise or accepting a fixed duty, then we tell the people, who always stuck to principle, to abandon us from that moment.” Mr. Absalom Watkins, Mr. John Brooks, some working men and

myself addressed the meeting, and the resolutions of thanks, and of recommendation that the movement should no longer be sectional but national were passed, without opposition, except from a small band of men who had made some effort to disturb the meeting, but were unsuccessful.

The League delegates met in the rooms of the Manchester Association on the following Thursday (March 7th), and thence adjourned to the Corn Exchange, where a numerous meeting was assembled. The following delegates were present:—Manchester: The Mayor (Sir Thomas Potter), Alderman Callender, Alderman Cobden, R. H. Greg, H. Hoole, Alderman Kershaw, Wm. Rawson, S. Robinson, C. J. S. Walker, George Wilson. Leeds: E. Baines, jun., Thomas Plint, James Garth Marshall, Peter Fairbairn, John Wilkinson, John Massey, H. Stanfield. Halifax: James Houtson, Jon. Ackroyd, John Gledhill, Samuel Smith, James Clarkson, John Baldwin, W. Barraclough. Lancaster: The Mayor (J. Armstrong), T. H. Higgin. London: P. A. Taylor, — Young. Preston: — Addison. Glasgow: Charles Todd, William Weir, Alex. Johnstone, W. Craig, John Pennant. Birmingham: Jos. Sturge, W. Boulton, — Edwards. Bradford: W. Byles, — Priestnall, Miles Illingworth. Bolton: The Mayor, A. W. Paulton, H. Ashworth, E. Ashworth. Burnley: G. Barnes, John Sellars. St. Pancras: James Foraby, John Newberry. Leicester: Kempson. Dundee: Kinloch of Kinloch, D. Baxter. Nottingham: Messrs. Close and Bean. Edinburgh: John Whigham, Hon. E. Murray. Huddersfield: David Shaw, William Williams, Frederick Schwann, Thomas Starke, Joseph Batley. Hull: Colonel Thompson. Sowerby Bridge: James Fielding. Kendal: Alderman Wilson. Warrington: Thomas Eskrigge, John Rylands. Derby: — Johnson. Wigan: J. S. Heron. Liverpool: Charles Holland, A. T. Atkinson, — Baxter, — Wood.

In the absence of Mr. J. B. Smith, Mr. R. H. Greg was

called to the chair. The speaking was mainly on the means of influencing members of the House of Commons, and especially of members of the administration who, returned by large constituencies, might receive instructions from their supporters. I copy the resolutions which were passed, to show the spirit with which the delegates met their first defeat :—

“ Moved by Mr. Young, of Mary-le-bone; seconded by Mr. Johnstone, of Glasgow, supported by Mr. Edmonds, of Birmingham :—

“ That the refusal to hear evidence against the Corn and Provision Laws, in the manner best calculated to expose their pernicious tendency, thus virtually closing the door of Parliament against the manufacturing and commercial population, is calculated to impair the confidence of the nation in the wisdom and justice of the legislature. Evidence collected from all parts of the kingdom, by the delegates, since their last meeting in Manchester, proves, beyond their former knowledge, that these laws are exercising a most pernicious influence upon manufacturing and commercial industry; whilst, at the same time, without benefiting the landowner, they are shown to operate most injuriously upon the interest of the cultivators of the soil, and especially upon that numerous class the distressed agricultural labourers.”

“ Moved by Mr. Marshall, of Leeds; seconded by Mr. Sturge, of Birmingham, supported by Mr. Plint, of Leeds, and Mr. Taylor, of London :—

“ That, whilst the thanks of the country are due to those members of the House of Commons who supported the prayer of the delegates, this meeting has seen, with regret and astonishment, among their opponents the names of certain of the people's representatives who have always been esteemed inimical to every species of monopoly and misgovernment. Whilst calling on their fellow-countrymen to suspend their opinion of those legislators until they shall have recorded their votes upon the substantive motion, shortly to be submitted to the House of Commons, the delegates earnestly hope that, on that occasion, every friend of freedom will be found advocating the right of the people to procure the first necessities of life, in exchange for the produce of labour, in the cheapest markets in the world.”

“ Moved by Mr. Cobden, of Manchester; seconded by Mr. Holland, of Liverpool, supported by Mr. Weir, of Glasgow :—

“ That the statesmen who undertake to administer the offices of this commercial empire, ought to bring to the responsible task, not only a

comprehensive knowledge of its interests, but also a decision of character adequate to the due application of their principles on all great emergencies. The repeal of the Corn and Provision Laws being a measure admitted, not only by its advocates, but by its opponents, to be of the most vital importance to the empire, cannot, with justice or safety, be made an open question by any administration. This meeting, nevertheless, behold with regret, that, upon the late division on Mr. Villiers' motion, the Queen's ministry declared their neutrality, as a cabinet, upon this great national question, thereby abandoning the exercise of one of its most important functions."

"Moved by Mr. Kinloch, of Dundee; seconded by the Mayor of Manchester, supported by the Hon. J. E. Murray, of Edinburgh :—

"That the delegates, having learned that on Tuesday evening Mr. Villiers brings on a motion in the House of Commons, for a committee of the whole house on the subject of the Corn Laws, do forthwith adjourn to London, and that the first meeting take place at Brown's Hotel, Palace Yard, at eleven o'clock on Tuesday morning the 12th instant."

"Moved by Mr. Whigham, of Edinburgh; seconded by Mr. Ackroyd, of Halifax, supported by Colonel Thompson :—

"That the delegates having, since their separation in London, received full powers from their constituents, to adopt whatever measures they may deem advisable for obtaining the total repeal of the Corn and Provision Laws, determined, as the surest means of effecting the good object, to promote, by every means in their power, a union of those great communities represented on this occasion; and they appeal to the co-operation of every class and calling in the country to aid them in throwing off, by an united and national effort, the most pernicious tax ever imposed by a legislature."

The censure, contained in these resolutions, on the neutrality of the administration, gave offence to a number of persons who professed free-trade principles, but would rather have their assertion delayed until gentlemen in office felt themselves disposed to make political capital of them. The delegates, however, disregarding these outside murmurings, met in increased strength in London at the time appointed, and having called Mr. J. B. Smith to the chair, the resolutions passed at their meeting in Manchester were read and confirmed. Amongst the speakers was



Daniel O'Connell, who met the allegation that the high price of food raised the wages of labour, by stating that the very reverse was the case in Ireland, where the euthanasia of the Corn Laws was a halfpenny an hour, or sixpence a-day, to the agricultural labourer. Dr. Bowring, as one of the evidence committee, said that statements given in by various members of the delegation, showed that the danger was even more imminent than it had been before represented.

On the same day (March 12th) Mr. Villiers moved in the House of Commons, that it should resolve itself into a committee of the whole house, to take into consideration the Act 9, Geo. IV., regulating the importation of foreign corn, and a debate ensued which extended over five sittings. The speakers in favour of the motion were: C. P. Villiers, Sir George Strickland, C. P. Thomson, Sir W. Molesworth, Mr. Grote, Mr. Clay, Joseph Hume, Mark Philips, Mr. Hobhouse, Joseph Brotherton, John Fielden, Daniel O'Connell, and Mr. Denniston. The speakers against the motion were: Mr. Cayley, Sir Edward Knatchbull, Mr. Christopher, the Earl of Darlington, Mr. Wodehouse, Lord Howick, Colonel Wood, Mr. Handley, Sir R. Peel, S. O'Brien, Sir John Tyrrell, Mr. Bennett, Viscount Sandon, Mr. Harvey, and Mr. Wood. On the division the numbers were:—

For the motion ..... 195

Against it ..... 342

On February 18th there was a majority of 189, that the petitioners against the Corn Laws should not be allowed to prove the truth of their allegations. On the 19th March there was a majority of 147 against taking the operations of the Corn Law into consideration. Something more was required to induce honourable members to consider, and something more still to come to honest action.

## CHAPTER IX.

### ESTABLISHMENT OF THE LEAGUE.

The delegates met again on Wednesday, the 20th, not convinced by the arguments which had been brought against their object in the "collective wisdom of the nation," not disheartened by the numbers arrayed against them, but with fresh determination to go on in their great purpose. They could not conceal from themselves that a great number of the 195 who had voted in favour of considering the question, would fall off when a total repeal should be asked for; and that it was necessary, before that demand could be made with any reasonable prospect of success, that the constituencies and the country in general should be further instructed and aroused. An address to the public was agreed upon, in which the following, amongst other measures, were recommended and adopted:

"The formation of a permanent union, to be called the Anti-Corn-Law League, composed of all the towns and districts represented in the delegation, and as many others as might be induced to form Anti-Corn-Law Associations and to join the League.

"Delegates from the different local associations to meet for business, from time to time, at the principal towns represented.

"With the view to secure the unity of action, the central office of the League shall be established in Manchester, to which body shall be entrusted, among other duties, that of engaging and recommending competent lecturers, the obtaining the co-operation of the public press, and the establishing and conducting of a stamped circular, for the purpose of keeping a constant correspondence with the local associations.

“That, in addition to the funds subscribed for local purposes by the several associations, at least £5,000 should be raised to defray the expenses of the general League for the ensuing year, and that every sum of £50 entitle the individual, or association subscribing it, to one vote in the appropriation of the funds of the League, and that on all other questions the votes of the persons present be equal.

“That this meeting adjourn, subject to the call of the Manchester Anti-Corn-Law Association; that it be left to their discretion at what time to bring forward the substantive question for the total abolition of the Corn Laws before Parliament, and to adopt any other measures to secure the great object of the association which they may think fit.”

The delegates then separated to agitate the question in all their various localities, not many of them, perhaps, thinking that they should have to meet again and again, often in every year, during a seven years' struggle, but all determined, whether the contest were to be short or long, to enter upon it with spirit, and to persevere until its accomplishment; and many of them disposed to combine with their demand for free-trade a demand for a more fair and free representation, although they saw the propriety of confining the movement to one easily defined object, for which all honest politicians could unite. Meetings were immediately held in nearly all the great towns which had sent representatives to the London conference, and the delegates became so many local missionaries to spread the doctrines that had been enunciated in the metropolis.

The Manchester association had put forth a number of hand bills and placards; it now began to publish more largely and systematically a series of pamphlets of uniform shape. Amongst these was “Facts for Farmers,” with the view of removing from the minds of that class the prejudices against any change of the Corn Laws which had been fostered by the landowners. The “Facts” were contained in a closely-printed octavo of eight pages, and were supplied to distributors in all parts of the kingdom, at a rate just sufficient to cover the expense of printing and paper. Mr. Villiers' speech followed, in two sheets octavo,

containing as much matter as an ordinary shilling pamphlet, but which was charged to the various associations at three-half-pence, its cost price. Mr. Poulett Thomson's speech, occupying sixteen pages octavo, was supplied at three-farthings. Of these first publications about 10,000 of each were printed. Subsequently the impressions were of 50,000 each; and when the appeals were to the electors of the kingdom, during the height of the agitation, as many as half a million each of the more popular tracts were printed at a time.

Amongst those was one which I wrote. I had seen around me, as great cotton spinners, machine makers, manufacturers, and merchants, the sons of farmers, Richd. Cobden, Thomas Potter (Mayor of Manchester), the Bannermans, the Brothers Grant (Dickens' "Brothers Cheryble"), and a host of others, giving employment to tens of thousands. The title of the tract was, "An Address to Farmers, on the way in which their families are to be provided for." I told the class I addressed, that my father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and great-great-grandfather had farmed land on the same estate from the time of Queen Elizabeth; that I should have been a farmer myself, but that my father used to say to his four sons: "One of you will succeed me in the farm, and the rest shall have such an education as will enable them to shift for themselves. I cannot stock four farms for you, and if I could, I would not send three of you *to bid against my neighbours*, and to raise their rents upon them;" and that, from that time, I had been convinced that farmers took a very mistaken view of their own interest, if they thought it could be promoted at the expense of trade, in which a great portion of their families would have to seek for employment. I gave a history of twelve families personally known to me. In these families there were *forty-seven sons*, who all arrived at man's estate, and only four of them remained farmers. There were *thirty-two* daughters, the

youngest of them of a marriageable age, only four of whom married farmers. Thus, of the whole *seventy-nine*, only *eight* had any direct interest in agriculture. The farm was but the nest, from which the birds were to fly to find their food elsewhere. The instances were taken from families which held rather extensive farms, and the sons, by emigration, or by seeking other employment, had sustained their fathers' station in society, and some had risen considerably above it. But the children of the smaller farmers had sunk to the class below that of their fathers. They had become farm-labourers, masons, joiners, smiths, or weavers, and the daughters had married into the same class. The landowner had other means of providing for his sons; the bar, the church, the army, the navy, the colonies, and government offices were all open to them. "But how," I asked, "are *you*, the farmers of Great Britain and Ireland, to find employment for *your* sons? Humble excisemen they may be, starving, like Robert Burns, on less than the salary of a valet; humble curates they may be, like the author of 'The Sabbath,' with little other reward than the consciousness of discharging their sacred duties; post-office clerks, stamp-office clerks they may be, with such remuneration as was offered to John Critchley Prince, and refused by the poet, as pay not equal to that of a Manchester porter; but while trade is depressed—while the capital employed in it yields little or no return,—and while the labour and skill exercised in it, receive no adequate reward, farmers' families must either sink into poverty or tear themselves from all they have held dear, and seek for independence in foreign lands."

In accordance with the resolution passed by the League at its formation in London, an organ of the new movement, designated *The Anti-Corn-Law Circular* was published in Manchester, the first number appearing in April. In a few weeks it had a circulation of 15,000, with an unusual number of readers, for almost every one who



received it made a point of lending it round amongst his neighbours, and then it was sent to some friend in an agricultural district, with the request that it should be lent to all that could be induced to read ; and much alarm was felt by protectionist landowners, when they found their tenants and their dependants conning the contents of that dangerous small sheet.

Numerous pamphlets, ten thousand of each, sent everywhere—a free-trade newspaper with a circulation of fifteen thousand, probably read every week by two hundred thousand persons—there needed only the vocal denunciation of the Corn Laws in the strongholds of the protectionists to increase the alarm. The lecturers soon followed the tracts and the free-trade newspaper. Many of the tracts were burned when found performing their silent mission. There was much disposition to dispose of the speaking missionaries in the same way. In May, Mr. Sidney Smith, and Mr. Shearman, lecturers of the League, were announced to appear at the theatre in Cambridge, as advocates of the repeal of the Corn Law, and were permitted to deliver their addresses without interruption. On the following evening, however, the students mustered in great strength, and, with the sound of trumpets and other discordant noises, prevented Mr. Smith from being heard. One gownsman, who made himself particularly prominent in the disturbance, roused the ire of the townsmen, who rushed to the boxes to turn him out. The gownsmen rushed to the defence of their fellow-student, a fierce battle ensued between “gown” and “town,” and it required strenuous exertions on the part of the mayor and the police to put an end to the riot. Before this could be accomplished considerable damage was done to the panels and furniture of the building, which was found strewn with torn college gowns and caps, left behind after the rioters had been turned out. Of the lecturers the *Cambridge Chronicle* said : “ It is rumoured that these fellows

intend to pay us another visit; but if so, they ought to have timely notice that they will be held responsible for any breach of the peace that may ensue—the forbearance of the *peaceable* (!) portion of the community may be taxed too far; and if the paid hirelings of a *disloyal* faction are to persist in inflaming the public mind, with sentiments destructive of all *moral right and order*, we cannot call too strongly, at the present crisis, upon the *well-disposed* portion of the community to assist the authorities in *putting down those revolutionary emissaries*.”

The League had commenced its operations in earnest, and the monopolists were alarmed. In June “The Central Agricultural Society of Great Britain and Ireland,” which title had been assumed by a combination of land-owners to protect their monopoly, issued an address, in which it was stated that of the three first numbers of the *Anti-Corn-Law Circular*, 10,000, 12,000, and 15,000 copies respectively had been put into circulation; that an immense number of anti-corn-law pamphlets had been distributed, more especially in the rural districts; and that the work of agitation had been begun and vigorously carried on by hired agents, who had already delivered lectures in about fifty different towns and villages. This was all true although somewhat short of the truth, for instead of fifty towns and villages having had instruction, there had been one hundred large towns which had benefited by the lectures of Mr. Paulton, Mr. Sidney Smith, Mr. Acland, and Mr. Shearman, besides all the places which had been visited by members of the Leeds and other anti-corn-law associations. The *Morning Herald*, copying the address, said:—

“It is undoubtedly incumbent on the agricultural body to lose no farther time in counteracting the pernicious schemes of the Anti-Corn-Law League. The members of that League, many of them unprincipled schemers, whilst of those members who may claim credit for honesty of purpose, there are but few, of whom it may be alleged that they are at best conceited socialists. Insignificant, however, as may be the ma-

materials out of which the Anti-Corn-Law League has been fashioned, it were worse than folly to shut our eyes to the probability that much mischief may, at no distant period, result from its unceasing efforts to injure the agricultural interests of England. The League has always brought into play all the approved modes of poisoning the stream of public sentiment. Lecturers are paid to perambulate the country, and to declaim against the 'atrocities of landed monopoly!' What though those men be empty conceited blockheads? They are permitted to tell their story, day by day, without contradiction, and their uncontradicted falsehoods come, at length, to be regarded as truths! The League, in like manner, issues, periodically, cheap publications condemnatory of the Corn Laws. These publications are diffused with incredible zeal, and the result will yet be visible on the state of public opinion. It is true, we repeat, that the agricultural interest should shake off its apathy in this matter. The Corn Laws are not to be saved by parliamentary majorities alone. Parliamentary majorities are really effective so long as they reflect the sentiments of the majority out of doors. Let public opinion be subjected for a long period to vicious influences, and the disposition in parliament to defend the Corn Laws will wax fainter and fainter. We trust, therefore, that the appeal of the committee of the Central Agricultural Society will be responded to with alacrity by the body of the landowners. The agricultural body must, in self-defence, adopt the tactics of their antagonists. If they shall do so, the Anti-Corn-Law League will very speedily be disposed of."

These vituperations, given as a specimen of the sort of writing with which the protectionist press met the arguments of the free traders, show that the League had hit hard. It was now fully organised and in active operation—no longer a movement of London, Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Leeds, and Glasgow, but NATIONAL. There was hard work before it, but there were stout hearts for the work; and there were the results of other movements to help it on. The reduction, in 1837, of the newspaper stamp-duty, from three-pence one-fifth to one penny, had greatly favoured the diffusion of principles adverse to monopoly, either in representation or trade. The seven-pence newspaper had been reduced to fourpence-halfpenny or fivepence, and of the consequent increased circulation to the amount of fifty per cent., the greater portion was shared by papers advocating political and commercial

reforms. After the publication of a few numbers of the *Anti-Corn-Law Circular*, the government required that it should have a penny stamp; but the payment of this tax enabled it to be sent post-free. Were the League to send its tracts and its letters to every village in the kingdom, in the work of enlightening its obscurest corners, it was desirable that there should be a cheap postage. Rich. Cobden, and other free traders of Manchester, had earnestly forwarded, by their evidence and their labour, the scheme of an uniform penny postage, originated and most admirably worked out by Mr. Rowland Hill, Mr. Charles Knight, Mr. W. H. Ashurst, and others, in London. It triumphed over the opposition of the government officials; and even the experiment of a uniform fourpenny rate, to precede the wider postal reform, was greatly favourable to the operations of the League, now in close correspondence with the leading friends of free trade in every large town. When the penny postage rate came, the correspondence of the League increased a hundred fold. The railways were rapidly spreading their ramifications, and, ere the contest was over, gave a seeming ubiquity to some of the more active members of the League.

Manchester had again the opportunity of asserting its free-trade principles by an election. Mr. Poulett Thomson accepted the appointment to the Governor-Generalship of the British Provinces of North America. He had found it difficult to reconcile his duty to his constituents with the support required to be given to the general policy of his colleagues in the government. In an extract from his "Journal," written when he had been a few days at sea, given by his brother in the "Life of Lord Sydenham," he says:—"Saturday, September 21, 1839. I have thought a good deal, within the last few days, of my position; and, upon the whole, I think I have done right, both on public and personal grounds. I have a better chance of settling things in Canada than any one they could have found to



go; and if I had not taken it then, as I could not well have got out of the government, I should have shared in the disgrace of next session. It is *a great field*, too, if I bring about the union, and stay for a year to meet the united assembly, and set them to work. On the other hand, in England there is little to be done by me. At the Exchequer, all that can be hoped is to get through some BAD TAX. There is no chance of carrying the house with one for any great commercial reforms, *timber, corn, sugar, &c.*; party and private interests will prevent it. If Peel were in, he might do this, as he could muzzle or keep away his tory allies, and we should support him. If he got in, and had courage, what a field for him! But he has *not*! On private grounds, I think it good too! 'Tis strange, however, that the office which was once the object of my highest ambition (the Exchequer), should now be so disagreeable to me, that I will give up the cabinet and Parliament to avoid it. After all, the House of Commons and Manchester are no longer what they were to me. I do not think I have improved in speaking—rather gone back. Perhaps in opposition, with more time to prepare, I might rally again; but I do not feel sure of it, I am grown rather nervous about it. The interruption and noise which prevails so much in the house *cours* me. I have certainly made no great speech for two years. It is clear, from what has passed, I might have kept Manchester as long as I liked. But till put to the test by my leaving it, one could not help feeling nervous and irritated by the constant complaints of not going far enough or going too far. The last three years have made a great change in me. My health, I suppose, is at the bottom of it."

This was written in a desponding tone for a man of acknowledged abilities, and only forty years of age. But he had been nine years in office, and believed that only in office could his talents be usefully employed. His despondency might be justly attributed to ill health, but he



might have asked himself whether his want of health was not attributable to the conflict between his sense of duty to his constituents and his conception of the duties he owed to the government, of which he formed a part. A similar conflict must have been endured by Mr. T. M. Gibson, when, at a later period, he also represented Manchester and held office; but he wisely resolved to sacrifice his position in the ministry, in order that he might, by an untrammelled course, retain the confidence of his constituents. Thomson had the merit of carrying out the designs of Lord Durham as to Canada, and he died a peer. There was a brighter career before him had he left the government, which he could not influence to the adoption of his measures, and taken active part with Villiers in the house, and Cobden out of the house, to compel its attention to the things necessary to the public comfort and peace. The apathy upon the Corn-Law question, of which he had so justly complained, no longer existed. A great movement had commenced, and he might have been at its head. He thought Peel could abolish the Corn Law, if he had the courage to do it; but Peel did not, until more courage was required to support than to repeal it. The emancipating measure was a matter of necessity with both whigs and tories. Mr. Thomson was an exceedingly useful pioneer, and it was deeply to be regretted that he did not see how still further he might be useful, by taking part, heart and hand, in the rapidly approaching battle.

The candidates for Manchester were Mr. Robert Hyde Greg, the brother-in-law of Mr. Mark Philips, and a member of the League; Sir George Murray, brought forward by the tories; and Colonel Thompson, brought into the field, greatly to the prejudice of that gallant veteran in the cause of free-trade, without any reasonable ground of expectation that he would be elected, but rather with the view of damaging Mr. Greg, who was considered not

radical enough for Colonel Thompson's proposers. Sir George Murray came warily into the contest, and endeavoured to conciliate the free traders by declaring his conviction, that the greatness of this country was founded upon commerce and manufactures, and that if any law was introduced, which should tend to drive them out of the country, it should be repealed. Mr. J. B. Smith asked the candidate, "What is the Corn Law?" and his reply was: "With regard to the Corn Law, all the agriculturists have a right to expect is, to have the same protection for their industry that the commercial and manufacturing men have for theirs. I am quite open to a fixed duty." "How much?" asked Mr. Smith, and Sir George's reply was, "I will not pledge myself exactly to that;" and thus he went on floundering:—

"I am called upon to say something about the Corn Laws. Why, gentlemen, you know that at present there is a fluctuating duty on corn. The bias on my mind is in favour of a fixed moderate duty. (Mr. Prentice: 'How much?') A gentleman asks me for how much. I am for a moderate fixed duty. ('Oh! oh!') I am for nothing, gentlemen, that will drive capitalists out of this country—('How much duty?')—because capitalists are necessary to put labour in motion, and I am for nothing that will be injurious to the operative classes of society; because they are at the base, at the foundation of the prosperity of the country. If you drive capitalists out of the country, whether they go to Geneva, or to America, or anywhere else, you ruin the country; and if you drive the operatives out of the country, you will ruin the country. ('The Corn Laws have done that already.') I heard some gentleman ask me a question. (Mr. Prentice: 'How much duty?') Why, you know, really, I cannot—(Hisses and laughter.) There is a gentleman at a distance says something. ('The Union.') Is that the union with Ireland you talk of? ('Yes.') I understand, now that that gentleman holds up a green bag; that is, I suppose, in allusion to Mr. O'Connell's colour. Well, gentlemen, I am a decided friend to the union, and to the consolidation of all parts of the United Kingdom. I will certainly not countenance the repeal of the union, because it will be equally injurious to both countries. ('The Corn Laws.') I really do not know, gentlemen, that there is any reason whatever why I should detain you longer; but I cannot help saying, gentlemen, that I have never, in any place where I have had occasion to address a large concourse of people, I have

never seen a concourse of people behave with more temper and propriety, and in a more becoming manner, than I have done at Manchester. People who live at a distance, imagine that when large multitudes of people are collected together, there is danger of disorder. There is no such danger at Manchester, I am certain. ('Flatterer.') Really, when so many gentlemen speak at once, it is difficult for one to know what they say. ('Stick to the Corn Laws; don't run off.') I have already stated that my opinion is, that a fixed moderate duty would be better than a fluctuating duty. (Mr. Prentice: 'Aye, but how much?') Mr. Prentice asks me how much. *He asks me to go into the House of Commons as a fettered representative.* I will not go there as a fettered representative. Gentlemen, I thank you very cordially for your kind attention."

*The Anti-Corn-Law Circular*, commenting on this speech, said: "This wretched shuffle cooled many of the political partizans of the candidate, and animated into violent hostility those supporters of liberal opinions whom the corporation question, and the alleged finality policy of government had formerly decided to take no part in the contest at all. Such poor evasion as it manifested could not possibly succeed with strong-minded men, such as Sir George was solicitous to represent. 'Stick to the Corn Laws; don't run off,' was truly a home thrust. He was, forsooth, in favour of a fixed duty. 'Aye, but how much?' Was not the answer very easy? Could he not have said at once 8s., or 10s., or 15s. or 20s. per quarter? Instead of this, he turns round, and says, 'Mr. Prentice asks me how much. He asks me to go into the House of Commons as a fettered representative.' No, he did not. He only asked his present opinion on the subject, which, considering that the Corn Laws have been twenty-four years in existence, that Sir George was long a cabinet minister and that he is now sixty-five years of age, he surely has made up his mind about them now, if he is ever to do so on this side of time."

The precept for the election had been addressed by mistake to the Boroughreeve, the old manorial officer, instead of the Mayor, and though it was recalled, he insisted

on acting upon it. There were, therefore, two days' polling. On the 5th of September, the poll, under the Boroughreeve as returning officer, stood thus at its close : Greg, 3,102 ; Murray, 2,762 ; Thompson, 64. On the 6th, under the Mayor as returning officer, the poll stood thus at its close :—

Greg, ..... 3,421

Murray, ..... 3,156

Giving a majority in Greg's favour of 265.

*The Anti-Corn-Law Circular*, of October 29th, contained quotations from the following newspapers, all of which advocated the repeal of the landowners' monopoly, and many of them with an ability which produced a powerful effect on the public mind :—

#### METROPOLITAN.

The Times.

The Sun.

The Spectator.

The Dispatch.

The Planet.

The Morning Chronicle.

The Morning Advertiser.

The Globe.

The Examiner.

The Patriot.

The Charter.

Athenæum.

Weekly True Sun.

#### PROVINCIAL.

Aberdeen Herald.

Arbroath Herald.

Ayrshire Examiner.

Aylesbury News.

Birmingham Journal.

Brighton Herald.

Bradford Observer.

Bolton Free Press.

Cheltenham Examiner.

Cheltenham Free Press.

Dundee Advertiser.

Durham Chronicle.

Devonport Independent.

Edinburgh Scotsman.

Edinburgh Observer.

Falmouth Packet.

Gateshead Observer.

Gravesend Journal.

Glasgow Reformers' Gazette.

Glasgow Argus.

Hampshire Independent.

Herts Reformer.

Kelso Chronicle.

Kendal Mercury.

Lancaster Guardian.

Leeds Mercury.

Leeds Times.

Liverpool Chronicle.

Liverpool Journal.

Manchester Times.

Montrose Review.

North Cheshire Reformer.

Portsmouth Independent.

Sturge's Circular.

Sheffield Independent.	Star in the East.
Sheffield Iris.	Tyne Pilot.
Stirling Observer.	Tyne Mercury.
Scottish Patriot.	Wiltshire Independent.
Scottish Pilot.	Yorkshireman.
Staffordshire Examiner.	

These were the journals quoted from in that one week. Many more might have been named which advocated free trade with much ability and earnestness. Besides the advocacy of free-trade principles, these journals did great service by reporting at length the numerous meetings, at which the Anti-Corn-Law lecturers were now carrying instructions into every quarter of England and Scotland; and agitation was further aided by forwarding to every Anti-Corn-Law Association, for distribution in each locality, the papers which contained these reports.

Mr. Paulton, who, before the formation of the League, had bestowed his gratuitous labours in the cause of free trade, was now earnestly at work under its sanction. On his return from an exceedingly successful tour of agitation in Scotland, where persons of all ranks had crowded to his lectures, a public dinner was given to him at Bolton, in November, by a hundred and twenty persons. Amongst the speakers, besides the guest of the evening, were Mr. J. C. Darbshire, the Mayor of the Borough, who presided, Mr. P. Ainsworth, M.P., Mr. Brotherton, M.P., Mr. Cobden, Mr. J. B. Smith, who had accompanied Mr. Paulton on his tour immediately after the establishment of the Manchester Anti-Corn-Law Association, Mr. Henry Ashworth, Mr. T. Ballantyne of the *Bolton Free Press*, and Mr. John Bright, of Rochdale, a young man, then appearing for almost the first time in any meeting out of his own town, and giving evidence, by his energy and his grasp of the subject, of his capacity soon to take a leading part in the great agitation.

Dr. Bowring, towards the close of 1839, did much to confirm the Lancashire and Yorkshire manufacturers, in



the principles which he had impressed upon them on his visit of the previous year. In November, a special meeting of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce was held, to hear him respecting the state and prospects of our relations with the countries comprised in the Prussian Commercial Union. He attributed the formation of that League to the refusal of our government to receive the products of Germany, and entered into a great variety of details to show the effect of our restrictive commercial policy, in raising rival manufactures on the continent. There was no debate, for the chamber was now constituted of free traders, but Dr. Bowring's views were strongly corroborated in able speeches by Mr. J. B. Smith, the president, Mr. Cobden, Mr. Thomas Bazley, Mr. Henry Ashworth, Mr. Robert Gardner, Mr. Samuel Stocks, and Mr. Benj. Pearson. The report of the meeting's proceedings appeared in the German papers, and gave rise to much discussion on the continent. "If," said one of the German journals, "the opinion of the Manchester people and of Dr. Bowring were to be found in English legislation, *that* would be something, but neither represent the government nor the Parliament." Certainly neither did. The object was to make both the government and Parliament yield. Dr. Bowring proceeded to Leeds, where there had arisen an active agitation against the Corn Law, and addressed its Chamber of Commerce very effectively. The Mayor, Mr. Baines, M.P., Mr. J. Holdforth, Mr. George Wise, Mr. John Sykes and Mr. John Waddingham, took part in the proceedings, the report of which was widely circulated in Yorkshire.

There had been formed in Manchester a Working Man's Anti Corn-Law Association, with its own officers and its own lecturers. This body (sending its lecturers to towns and villages seeming to require instruction), looking at the outrageous conduct of some of the working men at the meeting to receive delegates in the Corn Exchange,

thought it would be well that they should receive some enlightenment, and with this view invited Dr. Epps, of London, to give them two lectures. The meetings were crowded and much instruction was conveyed, and much incitement was given to action.

The borough of Manchester declared itself for repeal at a great meeting held in the Town Hall, at which Mr. H. Hornby Birley, a gentleman whose connection with the attack on the people assembled in St. Peter's Fields on the 16th August, 1819, made it little likely that he would have a favourable reception, moved, amidst many cries of "Peterloo," that in the opinion of the meeting the only change of the Corn Law should be to a moderate fixed duty, but that the change should not be permitted to be made by a ministry in which the people had no confidence. He was seconded by another conservative, and supported by two chartists, but the motion was negatived by an overwhelming majority, and the original resolutions were carried unanimously.

A volume might be filled with the vituperation poured out in the press against these manifestations of public opinion. A specimen or two may be given. The *Morning Post* said: "But the manufacturing people exclaim, 'why should we not be permitted to exchange the produce of our industry for the greatest quantity of food which that industry will anywhere command?' To which we answer, why not, indeed? Who hinders you? Take your manufactures away with you by all means, and exchange them anywhere you will, from Tobolsk to Timbuctoo; but do not insist on bringing your foreign corn here untaxed, to the ruin of your countrymen engaged in the production of corn. If nothing will serve you but to eat foreign corn, *away with you, you and your goods, and let me never see you more.* We do not want to drive you away. You are welcome to stay if you will; but remember, if you do, that

‘live and let live,’ is a fair, and honest, and English mode of proceeding.”

The *London Standard* spoke as plainly : “ The present cry against the Corn Laws is, at bottom, the work of a few *commercial swindlers*, though aided, no doubt, by the exertions of *political swindlers*, who see the benefit of an agitation calculated to disturb public attention from the misconduct of the (whig) government. It is well, however, to remember that the *commercial swindlers* are the prime movers ; because the honest class of traders, who would be the very first victims of a repeal of the Corn Laws, may be entrapped into joining the suicidal movement by what they believed to be good commercial names.”

## CHAPTER X.

### THE CAMPAIGN FOR 1840.

The free-trade campaign, for 1840, was commenced with great vigour. It had been determined that a numerous meeting of delegates should be held in Manchester, and that on the occasion of their assembling, there should also be given to the opponents of the Corn Law, throughout the populous district surrounding Manchester, an opportunity of hearing the advocates of unrestricted commerce. There was no hall in the town large enough to contain half of the actual members of the local association. It was therefore resolved to construct one for the purpose. Mr. Cobden, who owned nearly all the then unbuilt-upon land in St. Peter's Field, offered it as the site of the erection; and thus it curiously happened that it was raised upon the very spot, where, in 1819, a peaceably-met and legally-convened meeting was dispersed by the sabre, because its objects were to petition for a repeal of the Corn Law, and for reform in Parliament. The survivors of that fatal day had seen the Reform Bill passed; and many of them, seeing on that blood-stained field, a great place of assemblage rising up, to be devoted to the purpose of abolishing, by peaceful and temperate discussion, the oppressive monopoly against which the older radical reformers were all united, began to entertain the hope that, in spite of the protectionists and their new allies, the physical-force chartists, the time was coming when selfish mono-

polies would share the fate of the rotten boroughs. The erection of the temporary pavilion, afterwards to be replaced by the more permanent Free Trade Hall, was the work of one hundred men for eleven days. It is thus described in my paper of the time :—

“ The length is 150 feet ; width, 105 ; area, 15,750 square feet. In its frame work, pillars, &c., 4,500 cubic feet of timber have been used ; in the flooring of the pavilion and its ante-rooms 17,100 square feet of three-inch plank ; there were twenty-five tables from side to side ; it was seated for 3,800 persons, and 500 more found entrance after the dinner. It was lighted by twenty-four chandeliers of twelve burners each, eight chandeliers in each of the three aisles, and there were three others at the entrances. Besides these was a device in gas upon the wall above the president’s chair, consisting of the word **JUSTICE** in letters of a yard in length. About 20,000 yards of white and pink calico had been used in the drapery. The whole had a very light appearance, the ground of the draperies forming the walls and roofs of the pavilion being white, panelled by broad bands or fillets of pink and white drapery within, which gives the form of a coned roof to each of the aisles, at a height from the floor of from twenty to twenty-four feet. A striking relief to the almost uniform colour was given by the draperies which cover the front of the galleries. These were of a deep crimson, having mottoes inscribed on them in letters of large dimensions. The one along the principal gallery, directly facing the chair, and extending the whole length of the pavilion is, “Landowners ! Honesty is the best policy ;” that on the gallery at the east is, ‘Total and Immediate Repeal ;’ and that at the west, ‘A fixed duty is a fixed injustice.’ ”

Such was the demand for tickets to the banquet, that ten thousand might have been sold. Early on Monday morning, January 13th, indications of the approaching demonstration were apparent in most parts of the town. The arrivals of deputations from various towns in England and Scotland gave increased bustle and animation to the streets ; and in the afternoon the avenues immediately leading to the pavilion were crowded. Hundreds of people welcomed the arrival of Daniel O’Connell, at the railway station, then in Liverpool Road, and received him with loud cheers. At five o’clock, the seats in the body of the hall were all occupied, and the galleries were filled with



ladies. Soon after, the chairman, Mr. J. B. Smith, accompanied by Mr. Thomas Potter, the Mayor of Manchester, and most of the invited guests, entered the hall, took their seats on the platform, and were loudly cheered by the company, the band playing "God save the Queen." The hall at this period presented a most glowing and animated appearance. The spaciousness of the building, the brilliancy with which it was lighted, the long rows of tables along the vast area, the light and elegant drapery and flags, the illuminated devices and mottos, formed a scene of magnificence and beauty unsurpassed at any former public assembly.

At half-past five o'clock the chairman rose, and called upon the Rev. Thomas Spencer, of Hinton Charter House, Bath, to ask a blessing on what had been provided. After impressively referring to the provision made, the reverend gentleman prayed that the divine Giver of all good would "give us this day our daily bread," and that it might be bestowed not only on those present, but that all the brotherhood of mankind might participate in the same blessing. He prayed for a blessing on the sovereign of these realms, that she might long reign, and in peace, that she might be an honoured instrument in promoting the honour and glory of God, and the welfare and prosperity of all her people. He prayed also that God would bless the great council of the nation, that they might rise to the dignity of their exalted station, that they might lay aside all party prejudices and personal feelings and animosities, that they might rise above all self-interest, and all desire for worldly power, that they might be men of whom it might be said that they sought to do justly and loved mercy, men who would govern a nation righteously, always remembering the solemn account which they themselves must give when the day of judgment should arrive,—and that the curse of those who withheld bread from the poor might not be realised upon them. He prayed for a bless-

ing on that assemblage, and also that God would bless the eyes of the millions which were directed to that vast assemblage, and that he would crown their labours with the most abundant success. The reverential feeling manifested during this solemn address to the Giver of every good and perfect gift, afforded proof that the majority of that meeting felt that to support a movement which was to give bread to the people was a religious duty.

On the right of the chairman sat the Mayor of Manchester; D. O'Connell, M.P.; Mark Philips, M.P.; Edwd. Baines, M.P.; Peter Ainsworth, M.P.; Robert Philips, of Park; T. S. Duncombe, M.P.; Henry Marsland, M.P.; Sir De Lacy Evans, M.P.; Wynn Ellis, M.P.; John Fenton, M.P.; James Oswald, M.P.; G. A. Muskett, M.P.; Sharman Crawford; Dr. Bowring; Dr. Epps; William Ewart, M.P.; J. Easthope, M.P.; James Stewart, M.P.; N. A. Vigors, M.P.; R. Holland, M.P.; T. Chalmers, M.P.; J. Philpotts, M.P. On the left of the chairman were C. P. Villiers, M.P.; T. M. Gibson; H. Warburton, M.P.; George W. Wood, M.P.; H. Aglionby, M.P.; T. Thornely, M.P.; Richard Walker, M.P.; Joseph Brotherton, M.P.; and C. Hindley, M.P. In the central part of the room, in convenient situations, the deputations were accommodated. The following were present, delegated by the towns named:—

“Bolton: H. Ashworth and five others. Mottram: R. Matley. Warrington: J. Rylands, Joseph Crossfield. Hebden Bridge: John Riley, John Crossley, James Hodson, Rev. Mr. Butler. Birmingham: Boulton, Scholefield, M'Donnell, Geach, Edmonds. Sowerby: James Filding, M. Morley, John Wallace, Jno. Utley. Gloucester: Southern, Lane, Round. Sheffield: The Master Cutler, Samuel Jackson, Thos. Wyley, E. Smith, Pickers, W. Hobson, Eben. Elliott, S. Hadfield. St. Pancras: P. A. Taylor. Glossop: W. Platt, Kershaw, Lees. Taunton: Beedon. Kirkaldy: James Aytoun, Jno. Peter. Nottingham: Berry. Liverpool: James Mollineux, James Mellor, H. T. Atkinson, Lau. Heyworth, Charles Holland. Kendal: Richard Wilson, John Holme, J. Thompson, jun., Edward Brown, G. Chamley, R. J. Hawkes, Edward Gibson; Kendal Working Men's Association, John Gill, James

Spedding. Derby : Johnson. Paisley : Rev. P. Brewster. Rastrick : Clay. Aberdeen : James Adams. Leek : Davenport, Birch. Hawick : Walter Wilson. Stirling : Wm. Rankin. Huddersfield : W. Willans, Joseph Butler, R. G. Jackson, Kelly, Fred. Schwann, J. Robinson, T. G. Crossland. Dunfermline : Beveridge, Kidd, Inglis. Tower Hamlets : W. Coates, J. F. Gibson. Southwark : Redman, Alfred Roslin, James Gibb, Embleton, Wilson, Thomas Irwin, John Bowler, J. G. Harris, W. Mayhew, W. Bowler. Dudley : Blackwell, Palmer. Little : Thompson. Haslingden : Cockcroft, Dean, J. Rostron, T. S. Simpkins. Wolverhampton : W. Walker, James Walker, J. Wynn, Ben. Walton. Edinburgh : John Wigham, George Sinclair, G. Thompson. Carlisle : J. Dixon and five others. Darlaston : Maddock, Rubrey. Manchester Operative Association, Fred. Warren. Dobcross : James Lees, Robert Shaw, John Bradbury, B. Bent. Horton, near Bradford : J. Clayton. Stranraer : T. M'Master. Wigan : R. Thicknesse, J. Acton, Taylor, Banks, J. S. Heron, Bevan. Burnley : J. Holgate, W. Roberts. Leeds : W. Smith (Mayor), H. Stansfield, P. Fairbairn, E. Baines, jun., John Wilkinson, George Wilde, John Waddington. Settle : Thompson. Glasgow : Alex. Johnstone, Charles Todd, J. P. Reid, J. Tennant, Alex. Graham, Walter Buchanan, A. Duncan. Doncaster : Chadwick of Arksey, Leveson, Milner, Johnson. Ashton and Dukinfield : Samuel Robinson, Ralph Kershaw, Thomas Mason, Edw. Lees, J. Southam, Alfred Reyner, John Smith, Jos. Spenser, Geo. Higginbotham. Hanley : W. Ridgeway, J. Ridgeway. Lane End : Charles Mason, jun., John Mason. Cheltenham : W. P. Gaskell. Bradford (Yorkshire) : Robert Milligan. St. Mary-le-bone : Lord Nugent, Theobald Young. Shelf : Peel. Halifax : J. Baldwin, W. Dewhurst, Mich. Stocks, J. Houldsworth, John Gledhill, Henry Martin. Preston : F. Sleddon, J. Hawkins, Thomas Barker, W. Wilding, R. Ascroft, James Hegg, Geo. Smith. Stalybridge : W. Neven, Dakin Chatham, Jos. Tattersall, D. Cunningham, P. Auld, T. P. Madison. Stockport : The Mayor, the Town Clerk, Nelstrop, Hudson, Woollons, Ralph Pendlebury. Leicester : W. Biggs. Castle Douglas : John Hutton and another. Cleckheaton : Geo. Anderson, Christ. Goldthorpe. Idle : Geo. Oldfield, F. Audsley. Lees, near Oldham : P. Seville, Wm. Halliwell. Rochdale : Henry Kelsall, John Petrie, Roger Fenton, John Bright, John Hoyle. Oldham : G. Barron, Alex. Taylor, John Chadwick, J. Ashcroft, Scholes Brierley, John Bentley. Bilston : Wm. Bow, Dunmock. Blackburn : Joseph Eccles, W. Pilkington, Abbott, Willock."

The first toast after "The Queen," was "The Immediate and Total Repeal of the Corn and Provision Laws," the chairman remarking that since the last meeting in Man-

chester, another year's experience had shown the evils inflicted by those laws, and confirmed the truth of the predictions of those who had demanded their repeal. "Look at America," he said; "at this moment she owes us large sums of money. God has blessed her people with a most plenteous harvest, and if the Corn Laws did not prevent us from taking their corn, they would be able to pay us every farthing they owe." Mr. Mark Philips regretted that indisposition had prevented his being at the last year's meeting, and that his colleague in the representation of Manchester (Mr. Greg) should be absent from this from the same cause. Like the chairman, he pointed to the distress of the previous year, as a proof of the mischief inflicted by the Corn Laws, especially when we had deficient harvests at home, as the two last had been. It was too late now to talk of a fixed duty, the mischief had already been done, and the remedy ought to be immediate. The next toast was "The Hon. C. P. Villiers, the mover of the question for the consideration of the Corn Laws in the last session of Parliament, and the other members of the House of Commons who spoke and voted in support of the same." Mr. Villiers made a statesmanlike speech, in which he showed that while those laws were ruinous to the trade and commerce of the country, they were most injurious to the agricultural labourer, a delusion and a fraud to the farmer, and against the real and permanent interests of the landowners themselves. In conclusion he said :—

"I know that I am not addressing men who have come here to swell an idle show. I believe that they are men who have come to demand justice—who have been the first in the field of agitation—and who will not desert it ingloriously. I address not any particular class; I address those who care for the truth, who care for their country, and who understand its interests. I feel satisfied that there are enough of such men to rescue the country from a law which makes them the scorn and the mockery of their neighbours, which affords proofs to every despotic and tyrannical government, how much unjust, how much foolish, and



how much wicked legislation is compatible with the forms of freedom. Gentlemen, do fling away this badge of iniquity, English servility and ignorance."

Mr. Gisborne, then member for Carlow, followed, and congratulated the meeting that there was a small band in both houses of Parliament, who did not submit their judgment to squires' logic. Daniel O'Connell came next, and in a speech of mingled power, humour, and pathos, produced a great impression. "If the Corn Laws," he asked, "were good to rescue the people from wretchedness, why did they not rescue the people of Ireland? Were there not sixty or seventy thousand Irish in Manchester, driven there by destitution in their own country? If the Corn Laws gave employment and high wages, why did they not give them in agricultural Ireland?" Subsequently he asked, what the Corn Laws were for? "To put money into the pockets of the landlords—not the money of the Russians, the Danes, or the Swedes, but that of their fellow-countrymen."

Mr. Cobden followed O'Connell, and occupied the time of the meeting only for about ten minutes, so little disposed was he to take that prominent part which naturally fell to him when, in the subsequent long and ardent struggle, each of the free-trade agitators had the place tacitly assigned to him for which his peculiar talents fitted him. John Bright, also, had yet to find his proper place; he was but little known out of his native town, and on this memorable evening he was sitting down in the body of the Hall, undistinguished amongst the other delegates. Cobden's speech, though short, was not without proof of some of the qualities which were afterwards to characterize his career—his brief exposure of landlord fallacies was trenchant and conclusive, and he effectively asserted the world-wide interest of a question which had not often been regarded as more than one of conflicting interests in these narrow islands. "We have here," he said, "gentlemen



from almost every region of the globe. We have here gentlemen from Mexico, and from the United States; from Paris and St. Petersburg; from Odessa and Geneva. Indeed, I scarcely know a town within the German League which is not represented here to-night. They will unite the Baltic and the Black Sea, and cover their rivers with commerce as the rivers of England are covered. The object of the Anti-Corn-Law League is to draw together in the bonds of friendship — to unite in the bonds of amity, the whole world."

A Suffolk landowner, Thomas Milner Gibson, appeared on this occasion, for the first time before a Manchester audience, and by his youthful and gentlemanly appearance, and by the mingled good humour and pungency with which he demolished the arguments and statements of men of his own class, from whom he had come out to make common cause with the people, made a most favourable impression. The other speakers were Edward Baines, jun., of the *Leeds Mercury*, a journal which had rendered good service to the cause of free trade; the Rev. Mr. M'Donnell, of Birmingham; Dr. Bowring, who, in September, 1838, had given the first impulse to the formation of the great confederacy; the patriotic Sharman Crawford; George Thompson, the eloquent advocate of negro emancipation; Ebenezer Elliott, whose vigorous "Rhymes" had done much to rouse public indignation against the Corn Laws; and the veteran reformer, and co-labourer with Joseph Hume, Henry Warburton.

Another magnificent banquet followed. On Tuesday evening five thousand working men dined together in the new pavilion, and the gallery was filled by the wives, daughters, sisters, and friends of those who sat below. The chair was taken by Mr. Frederick Warren, president of the Operatives' Anti-Corn-Law Association; and the platform was occupied by the Mayor of Manchester (the public-spirited Thomas Potter), M. Philips, M.P., Joseph

Brotherton, M.P., Daniel O'Connell M.P., Thos. Milner, Gibson, Col. Thompson, Dr. Bowring, Dr. Epps, George Thompson, Richard Cobden, with a large list of other gentlemen. The blessing before dinner was prayed by the Rev. Dr. P. Brewster, of Paisley. The most striking feature of this vast assemblage was the order, propriety, and general excellent demeanour of all the company. Their conduct throughout the whole proceedings, which lasted till near two o'clock in the morning, excited the highest admiration of the guests from a distance, and reflected great credit upon the working classes of Manchester. The speakers were Richard Cobden, Joseph Brotherton, M.P., George Thompson, Col. Thompson, Dr. Epps, the Mayor of Manchester, the Rev. T. Spencer, the Hon. C. P. Villiers, M.P., Daniel O'Connell, M.P., Henry Warburton, M.P., Thomas Milner Gibson, the Rev. Dr. Brewster, the Rev. Mr. Winterbottom, and Mr. George Greig, one of the lecturers of the League. The admirable conduct of the working classes, and the marked proofs of their intelligence were suggestive, and in my paper of the following Saturday I said :—

“ The demonstration, on Monday and Tuesday, against the Corn Laws was one of the greatest that was ever made on any public question, and will produce an extraordinary impression, not only in these islands, but in every part of the world with which we have commercial relations. At home, the members of Parliament, and the delegates from all the large towns between Taunton and Aberdeen, will describe in glowing terms, the magnificent scene, and the unity and determination of purpose which they witnessed ; and they will spread, in their several localities, an unquenchable spirit of opposition to the unholy and destructive monopoly. We refer, with peculiar pride and gratification to the second evening's meeting, where five thousand persons, of whom at least four thousand were of the working classes, assembled, and by their scrupulous decorum at the dinner table, their rivetted attention to the various speakers, their knowledge of the subjects discussed, as evidenced by their instant apprehension of every argument, proved the gross falsehood of the assertion, that they regarded with indifference the efforts of other classes of society to procure for them the full reward of their industry and skill, and their just share in the bounties

which a beneficent Providence has prepared for all mankind, but which are wickedly intercepted by the legislation of the selfish landowners. We rejoice, moreover, in that second evening's demonstration, as affording the most cogent proof that could be given of the capacity of of all persons present to exercise, with benefit to themselves and to the community, the elective franchise, unjustly withheld by tory obstruction and whig finality."

The delegates did not leave Manchester without deliberate conference on the means of promoting their great object. Mr. Villiers having agreed to bring forward a motion on the Corn Laws, on the 26th March, it was resolved that the various associations throughout the kingdom, now greatly increased in number, and animated with great zeal and determination of purpose, should be invited to send delegates to meet in London previous to that day, and that each should come prepared with statements as to the actual condition of the people in his own locality, as proof of the necessity of the instant repeal of a law which had involved the country in deep and constantly increasing distress. The delegates re-assembled in London, on Tuesday, March 24th, and deputations were appointed to wait upon Lord Melbourne, Lord John Russell, and upon influential members of Parliament, to represent to them the state of the country, and especially of the working classes, and to urge them to support Mr. Villiers' motion, intended to be brought forward on that day week. On Friday the delegates, more than two hundred in number, were received by Lord Melbourne at the Colonial Office, in Downing-street. Amongst them were ten or twelve individuals who annually expended in wages upwards of one million sterling. Mr. John B. Smith, the chairman of the delegates, opened the business by laying before his lordship a forcible statement of the injurious operation of the Corn Laws upon the industrial population, and their effect in increasing the poor rate. Mr. Cobden then called his attention to the difference of protective duties and duties levied solely for revenue, and reiterated the recorded reso-

lution of the delegation to give up all protection upon manufactures if the tax upon the food of the people were removed. Mr. Joseph Sturge showed that if the duty were abolished altogether, and the ports thrown open, our farmers would be able to compete with foreigners who would be subjected to the expenses of importation, in themselves a considerable protection to the home producers of corn. Lord Melbourne inquired what was the object of the delegation? Was it repeal, or a modification of the existing system? They replied that it was immediate repeal. "You know that to be impracticable," said his lordship. Mr. J. B. Smith said there was a most material objection to the continuance of the present system,—under the fluctuating scale of duties it was impossible to prevent sudden drains of gold, which were followed by a serious derangement of the currency, and other most injurious consequences to the monetary system of the country :—

"Lord Melbourne: That's the truth; but the suddenness of a total repeal would never do. It would be followed by general discouragement throughout the kingdom, and be attended with the worst effects. I have decided objections, both in practice and theory, to a total repeal.

"Mr. Mark Philips briefly explained the difficulties to which the country had been exposed, and would continue to be exposed, from scarcities of grain, and showed that they would be avoided by the constant and regular trade which would be established under unrestricted importation. Foreign nations would then be enabled to calculate the probabilities of any deficiency of food in this country and make their preparations accordingly.

"Mr. J. B. Smith said that Belgium, France, and Naples, had closed their ports against the transmission of grain to this country, and we should be constantly exposed to similar proceedings from other governments, unless there was the security of a regular demand.

"Lord Melbourne replied that the trade in corn never could be a regular one, depending as it did upon many and varied contingencies.

"Mr. Sturge observed that the greater the extent of the trade, and the wider the intercourse with other countries, the less would it be liable to the contingencies alluded to.



“ Mr. J. B. Smith said that had they fifty markets to resort to instead of one the trade would be almost uniformly equable.

“ Mr. Aitken, of Liverpool, an extensive shipowner, said he was in the habit of sending his ships to be victualled abroad, provisions there being lower in price. On an average they were one-third less. The law would not permit provisions to come to the people, but it could not prevent their going to the provisions.

“ Lord Melbourne (as if he had detected a fallacy): Then, according to your argument, a repeal of the existing laws will lower the price of corn here?

“ Mr. Aitken: It will tend not so much to lessen the price here as to equalize it everywhere. The present law has raised the price here and depressed it abroad.

“ Lord Melbourne: Then, considering your own individual interest, the existing system is most desirable?

“ Mr. Aitken said that the excessive inconvenience and loss of time much overbalanced the seeming advantage.

“ Lord Melbourne observed that were the ports free, foreign nations would not relax their protective duties upon native industry. Their manufactures were a great deal too important. If they would consult their own interest it might be otherwise, but the general opinion of the world was against free trade. To give all first was not the way to commence negotiations for reciprocal advantages. There could be no question that their principle was right; but nations did not always see their own interest.

“ The Mayor of Carlisle (Mr. Dixon) next addressed his lordship and drew a most heart-rending picture of the deep distress pervading that city and its neighbourhood. The working men were compelled to expend their poor pittance of wages almost entirely on food. While it remained at its present high price they could get no clothing, and the home trade had fallen off in consequence. For forty years back there had not been such deep distress.

“ Lord Melbourne (doubtingly): Do you mean to say that they are in a worse condition than you ever remember?

“ Mr. Dixon (emphatically): I have come here to state that fact. The wages are lower than I ever remember them to have been in the cotton trade.

“ The further discussion was to a similar effect. In conclusion Lord Melbourne said he could not pledge himself to repeal. He acknowledged the respectability of the deputation; but the government had left the matter to the House of Commons. The Chairman of the dele-



gates said: 'My lord, we leave you with the consciousness of having done our duty, and the responsibility for the future must rest upon the government.'"

I was not present at this interview. I found, on my arrival in London, two or three days afterwards, that Lord Melbourne's reception of the deputies had excited the strongest indignation. His ignorance of the main bearings of the question, and his notion that the consumers of this country should pay a monopoly price for corn because, possibly, other countries might not take our manufactures in exchange, only created astonishment; but his manner, which was not reported, there being no short-hand that can give looks and tones, excited a feeling little short of disgust, especially when, with a smiling and incredulous air, he listened to the plain and straightforward, but feeling and pathetic description which Mr. Dixon gave of the distress prevailing in Carlisle. Mr. Walker, of Wolverhampton, gave instant expression to his own sentiments on the occasion, by declaring that, in his part of the country, both whigs and tories should be set aside, and that a new system of agitation would commence throughout the iron districts; and he was responded to, notwithstanding the etiquette and formality of Downing-street, in the presence of the prime minister, by an almost universal cry from the deputies, that the new agitation would extend to all the manufacturing districts. This feeling was more unequivocally expressed at a subsequent meeting of the deputies, when an allusion by Mr. O'Connell to the necessity of reorganizing the House of Commons, or, as he expressed it, of putting new machinery into it, was received with loud cheers. A deputation to Sir Robert Peel and Sir James Graham was not more satisfactory than that to Lord Melbourne. Sir James talked a great deal about land being thrown out of cultivation were the Corn Laws repealed, and about foreign nations taking undue advantages of us at any favourable opportunity. The possessor and

the expectants of the premiership were alike adverse to the thorough commercial reform demanded, alike regardless of the wants of the many, alike disposed to support the selfish monopoly.

A considerable accession was made to the number of deputies in consequence of the indignation which had been excited in the country by the perusal of Lord Melbourne's replies to the delegation. Amongst these were two gentlemen from Derby, who, when called upon in the previous week to proceed to London, had declined to do so, on the ground that their presence would not be necessary, as they could not believe that ministers would be adverse to repeal; but who, so soon as they heard of the premier's opposition to the principles of free trade, hastened to Palace Yard, and swelled the contributions towards a three years' agitation, by the subscription of £100 a-year each. The origination of this fund to ensure a contest of so long a duration was a proof, at once, of the determined purpose of the delegates, and of their conviction that, with the leaders of the two successively governing factions in Parliament against them, there were formidable difficulties to be overcome before they could attain their object.

On Tuesday, Lord John Russell, Mr. Baring (the Chancellor of the Exchequer), and Mr. Labouchere (the President of the Board of Trade), having agreed to give an audience to the delegation, they proceeded to Downing-street in a formidable array, more than one hundred and fifty in number, and completely filled Mr. Baring's office. Lord John Russell was unable, from indisposition it was alleged, to be present; but Mr. Baring said that his lordship was favourable to "a moderate fixed duty up to the famine point." He must have seen, from the countenances of his auditors, what impression this had made; for, with a good deal of hesitation and stammering, he corrected himself, by substituting the phrase, "a vanishing point," when the

price of wheat reached seventy shillings. The whole conduct of the delegation ought to have made a deep impression on ministers, had they ever looked beyond the limits of their parliamentary power. Mr. J. B. Smith began the conference in a modest and respectful but perfectly firm manner, and then called on Mr. E. Ashworth, who gave a deeply distressing account of the state of Bolton, and boldly advocated repeal, not as a manufacturers' question, but as a measure of justice and humanity. He was followed by the Rev. P. Brewster, of the Abbey Church, Paisley, whose position as a clergyman having disposal of the scanty parochial fund doled out to relieve the poor in Scotland, gave him ample opportunity of observing their wretched condition. The Mayor of Carlisle was next called forth, and gave an affecting account of the state of the working classes there. He said that its peace was preserved mainly by the hope that the Anti-Corn-Law deputies would be able to effect something for their relief, and if that hope should be disappointed, an agitation of a very different kind would no doubt commence. Mr. John Brooks, the worthy Boroughreeve of Manchester, followed, and stated, unmoved, many instances of serious depression in the property of men of his own class; but when he came to give a detail of the distresses of the working classes, and to describe one particular family, the members of which, after a life of economy and industry, had been compelled to pawn articles of furniture and clothes, one after another, till nothing was left but bare walls and empty cupboards, his feelings completely overpowered him, convulsive sobs choked his utterance, and he was obliged to pause till he recovered from his deep emotion. The tears rolled down the cheeks of Joseph Sturge; John Benjamin Smith strove in vain to conceal his feelings; there was scarcely a tearless eye in the multitude; and the ministers looked with perfect astonishment at a scene so unusual to statesmen and courtiers. Mr. Labouchere's

reply was not of a kind to elevate his reputation as a statesman. He said he would not so far alter long existing policy by withdrawing all protection to agriculture; that ministers could not negotiate with other countries, as they were not assured, in the then state of party feeling in the legislature, that their negotiations would be confirmed, and that, whatever might be the opinion of the cotton manufacturers, he very much doubted whether other manufacturers would abandon protection to themselves in exchange for free trade in corn. On this latter point, I replied that at Macclesfield, where I had been on the previous week, the silk manufacturers and their workpeople had unanimously resolved to petition for the total repeal of the Corn Law, and had declared that if they had free trade in corn, they would ask for no protection to the silk manufacture. Mr. Ellison, of Dewsbury, and Mr. Holland Hoole, of Salford, proved that the Corn Law and the New Poor Law could not exist together; for, while bread was so high, and the price of labour was so low, the guardians could not refuse to give food to the able-bodied labourer who could not find employment. Joseph Sturge made a powerful appeal to the ministers, placing the whole question upon the eternal principles of justice and humanity, which, he said, were shamefully outraged by a tax on the food of the people. The conference, if such it could be called, where unpalatable truths were forced upon the attention of unwilling ears, was appropriately closed by some bold and really eloquent remarks from Mr. Cobden, who told the ministers that their decision would become a matter of history, and "would stamp their character as either representatives merely of class interests, or the promoters of an enlightened commercial policy." They chose the former, and five years of further deep national distress, and symptoms of consequent danger were required to convince them, then out of office, that



the promotion of general rather than of class interests was the legitimate business of legislation.

On Wednesday, Mr. Villiers brought forward his motion, "That the house resolve itself into a committee of the whole house, to take into consideration the act of George IV. regulating the importation of foreign corn." The motion was seconded by Sir George Strickland. The Earl of Darlington abused the League, and said the press was in its pay. Mr. Labouchere said, if it were in his power, he would have a duty of from 7s. to 8s. to fall to 1s. when wheat rose to 70s. ! but he did not mean to say that, for the sake of compromise, he would not have a higher duty ! The debate was adjourned to Thursday, when Lord Morpeth declared in favour of a fixed duty, in preference to the sliding scale. He acknowledged that the people were in deep distress, and, looking at the increasing prevalence and power of their demands, he thought the time was not far distant "when a freer and more unrestricted access of foreign corn would more amply repay the efforts of our domestic industry, and secure and extend the harmony of nations." The debate was adjourned to Friday, April 3rd, when, after Mr. Brotherton, Mr. R. H. Greg, and a few other members had been heard, Sir Robert Peel objected to the motion on three points :—First, That the Corn Laws had nothing to do with the drain of bullion. Second, That there was no inequality of prices under the existing law which would not take place under any other ; and, Third, That the depression in trade was not proved, because the exportation of manufactured goods had increased within the last year. An end was put to the debate, by Mr. Bradshaw cunningly moving to adjourn it to Monday week, when it was known that the house would be otherwise occupied. Mr. Warburton, to avoid a division when many of the supporters of the motion had gone away in the belief that the house would not be divided, moved that it should then



adjourn, and the motion became a dropped order. It was easier for the supporters of monopoly, whig and tory, Lord John Russell and Sir Robert Peel, Mr. Labouchere and Sir James Graham, to let the discussion thus drop than to meet the arguments of the free-trade advocates. Curious enough that those obstructives should, in a few years more, be contending which amongst them were the best free traders !

The delegates met at Brown's Hotel, on Saturday, the 4th of April, when the following resolutions were passed :

"That the efforts of the deputies to obtain a vote of the House of Commons, on the question of the Corn Laws, having been most unexpectedly thwarted by the success of our opponents, in prematurely putting an end to the debate on Mr. Villiers' motion, without any decision on the merits of the question, it is expedient to request Mr. Villiers to bring the subject again before the House as early after the Easter recess as possible."

"That the delegates are not discouraged by the result of the late debate ; that they derive new determination, as they find new motives for exertion, in all that has occurred ; that they feel their various arguments are unanswered—their cause strengthened—their confidence in ultimate triumph unabated ; and they pledge themselves to one another, and to the nation, not to relax until the mighty grievance, under which the community is suffering, be removed."

"That, dissociating ourselves from all political parties, we hereby declare that we will use every exertion to obtain the return of those members to Parliament alone who will support a repeal of the Corn Laws."

The last resolution was not passed without deep deliberation. Many of the whigs in office, before the passing of the Reform Bill, had been opponents of the Corn Laws, and it was believed that they continued to be favourable to free trade, although, during their continuance in office, they never found the fit and proper time practically to exhibit their attachment to its principles. There was a belief that in the struggle to destroy the landowners' monopoly the whigs would lend a friendly hand ; and there was great unwillingness to embarrass an administration of

which such hopes were entertained. It required, therefore, some firmness of resolution to declare that, in future, no distinction should be made between whig and tory candidates, and that none should be supported on the hustings but those who would pledge themselves to vote for the repeal of the Corn Laws. The men in office cared little for the declaration. They had a happy indifference to what other men might regard as signs of the times. For eight or nine years they had found that the cry of "do not embarrass the administration," and "keep the tories out," had drawn around them those who had occasionally shown a disposition to diverge into more radical courses. They thought the same cry would serve them in any emergency, and they laughed at the notion that the assertion of an "abstract principle" would withdraw any of their usual supporters from their party allegiance.

## CHAPTER XI.

### FURTHER MOVEMENT IN 1840.

Mr. Villiers renewed his motion on Tuesday, the 26th of May, after the presentation of petitions against the Corn Laws with a quarter of a million of signatures, in addition to those to which a million and a quarter of names had been attached presented before his last motion. These strong demonstrations of public opinion had no effect on the house. It became manifest, the moment he began to speak, that there was a fixed determination to give neither him nor the petitioners a fair hearing. He was assailed from his outset with a volley of sounds, such as could have been heard in no other deliberative assembly in the world. The Speaker's calls to order were utterly disregarded, and it was not till, losing all patience, he commanded the bar to be cleared and members to take their seats, that the enlightened advocate of free trade could be heard in the gallery. Again did the Babel-like confusion arise, and again had the Speaker occasion, most peremptorily, to assert his authority; but even this would have availed nothing, had not the time arrived when the *fruges consumere nati* usually went to dine, and then, with about a hundred auditors, Mr. Villiers was allowed to proceed without interruption. Lord John Russell asked what the government could do, when a majority of the house was against any alteration of the law? He would vote, he

said, for the motion, but not with a view to total repeal, as his own opinion was in favour of a moderate fixed duty. Mr. Strutt followed in favour of repeal, and then the noisy disturbance commenced afresh. The gentlemen born to dine, had, for that night, performed that important function, and they returned, heated with wine and hatred of any invasion of their vested right to put their hands into the pockets of the herd of bread eaters. Mr. Warburton was assailed in the middle of his speech by loud cries of "Divide, divide;" and when Mr. Mark Philips, representing a constituency equal to the aggregate of fifty undisfranchised but still corrupt boroughs, returning seventy-two members, rose to enforce the claims of the most important manufacturing community in her Majesty's dominions, he was greeted with deafening clamour. It was useless to carry on the discussion under such circumstances. The call for a division was acceded to, and the numbers were found to be:—

Against the motion, ..... 300

For it,..... 177

Majority in favour of the continuance, unmitigated, of the landowners' monopoly, 123.

The delegates, who had again met in London, renewed their declaration that they would resume their agitation with increased determination to attain their great object, and I had the honour of moving, my heart going heartily with it, a renewal of the pledge that we should use every exertion to obtain the return of those members alone who would vote for the repeal of the Corn Laws.

The division in the House of Commons was on the 26th of May. In my paper, of the 6th of June; I find the following notices of the commencement of the rebellion of the belly in Ireland. The wonder was that it did not break out sooner:—

"The *Limerick Reporter*, after stating that at Listowell the state of the poor was awfully deplorable, potatoes being sixteen pence a stone,

and there being no employment, says, ‘On Monday morning, about ten o’clock, a boat containing 560 barrels of oats, the property of Mathew Reddan, Esq., or Tomgreeny, while waiting for the steamer, at Garrykennedy harbour, on its way to Limerick, was boarded by a large body of the populace, who, we are informed possessed themselves of part of the grain. The police were sent for to Killaloe, but did not arrive in time to capture any of the people, or to save the property.’ The *Dublin Pilot*, of Wednesday, says that ‘the populace of Limerick, many of them, no doubt, *prompted by the cravings of hunger*, have broken out in violent attacks on the flour stores and provision shops throughout that city, sparing none in their devastation. The stores of Sir David Roche, and those of Mr. Caswell, Mr. Poole Gabbett, and Messrs. Harvey, all were attacked, and from each flour has been taken and distributed by the ringleaders in the coolest way imaginable. Far from justifying such conduct, we may account for it thus:—Provisions have risen so high, they are now beyond the reach of the poor—potatoes being 8d. per stone in the town, although we are informed by the *Reporter* that no actual scarcity exists. The crowd were at length dispersed by the military, and the mayor has called a meeting of the inhabitants, to provide some means of meeting the distress. In the meantime he has distributed ten tons of oatmeal amongst the most wretched, which, for the present, has quieted their cravings. But while all this is going on, the absentees are spending a thousand pounds each on a single ball! Repeal the Union we say to the people of Limerick; no other permanent remedy can ever be applied.”

My comment at the time was: “Repeal the Union! *Repeal the Corn Law*. That is both the immediate and the permanent remedy. It is melancholy to hear this puling cry about a thousand pounds spent at a ball, while millions are taken from the Irish population under the pretence of protection—of protection to Irish agriculture. It is the lament that the farthing is not *spent* amongst them, while they say nothing of being *robbed* of the pound! This belly insurrection is the necessary consequence of reducing the people to potatoes as their only food. When wheat is the principal article of consumption, and when there is a scarcity of that grain, recourse may be had to barley, oats, and rye, all furnishing comparatively nutritious farina; and when all these are scarce, the potato becomes



a useful substitute. But then the Corn Law has raised the price, not merely of wheat, but of all the other corns used in the production of bread, and by shutting out the products of our industry from foreign markets has lessened the demand for labour and lowered its reward; and, as the mass of the people have, by this double process, been reduced to a potato diet, the failure of the potato crop leaves them absolutely without food. This is the present condition of hundreds of thousands in Ireland—in Ireland, supposed to be so especially benefited by the Corn Law—in Ireland, for whose especial benefit legislators tell us that, even if the landowners of Great Britain derived no advantage, the Corn Law should be continued! One cause of the contempt with which the people's petitions were received in the Commons was the belief that the fine weather and the fine appearance of the crops would speedily put an end to Anti-Corn-Law agitation. It was forgotten that the stock of last year's potatoes, the *only* food of Ireland, might be exhausted before the new crop was ready. The far-seeing legislators overlooked the interval; and the consequence of their oversight is the deliberate sacking of the provision stores of Limerick, by men whose desperation rendered them insensible to all fear. These things take place when corn and flour, to the amount of four or five millions sterling, might, in a few weeks, be had in exchange for the same amount of our manufactured goods." The emphatic warning given by starvation and tumult was thrown away upon the government and the legislature, The population of Ireland was still to subsist on a watery root, and no provision was made for the possible failure of that precarious crop. Was it blindness or utter heartlessness, or grasping avarice, that left eight millions of people to this terrible contingency?

At a meeting of the delegates, in London, a number of agricultural labourers, from different counties, were publicly examined as to their condition, to meet the allegations

of the landowners, that, whatever might be the distress amongst the manufacturing population—distress which they attributed to over-production, or any other cause than the real one—the farm labourers were enjoying the benefits of protection to agriculture. By this public examination, reported fully in the newspapers at the time, it was incontrovertibly proved that the wages of the agricultural labourer in the summer were barely sufficient to procure the common necessities of life; that in winter even those could not be had without aid from private charity or from the parish; that clothes were worn year after year, till the numerous patches entirely covered the original fabric; and that their wages did not rise with the rise of the price of food; and that, consequently, their condition was improved in cheap, and greatly deteriorated in dear years. It had previously been demonstrated that if the Corn Laws had raised the price of farm produce, the farmers had paid away in the shape of increased rents the whole of their increased receipts; and the proof, widely diffused, by the newspaper press and by the tracts of the League, that the agricultural working class benefited nothing by laws which were passed professedly for their benefit, did much to procure for its lecturers a better reception in the agricultural districts, where landowners and farmers had encouraged their labourers to meet argument by brute force.

Another inquiry was instituted, not so immediately striking, but gradually exciting a wider discussion, and leading to more important results. On the 5th of May, Mr. Hume, more capable of extended prospection than men who regarded him only as a pertinacious worker in economical detail gave him credit for, obtained a select committee of the House of Commons, “To inquire into the several duties levied upon imports into the United Kingdom, and how far those duties are for protection to similar articles, the produce of this country or of the British possessions abroad, or whether the duties are for revenue alone.” The

opponents of the Corn Laws had protested against a tax of which a small part only found its way into the public revenue, while by much the greater part went into the pockets of a favoured class. Here, then, was a most important inquiry, but it excited little notice at the time. I published in my paper a considerable portion of the evidence, selected for me by Mr. Hume; and even in Manchester, where the bearings of the Corn Law had been carefully studied, few persons took an interest in the investigation. The opening out of this new field is well described in the *British Quarterly Review*, of May, 1845, from which the following are extracts :—

“ The committee well discharge their task; and in their report and the evidence annexed to it, presented the country with a body of facts and opinions of the very highest value to the cause of commercial and industrial freedom. The condemnation of the restrictive system, in all its ramifications, was decisive and complete. Official witnesses, secretaries of the Board of Trade, every way practical men—men possessing means of observation and judgment far superior to those possessed by the leaders of Parliamentary parties—brought their official experience and knowledge to testify to the commercial obstruction, the fiscal exhaustion and embarrassment, the national waste, impoverishment, and suffering inflicted by the various monopolies which we pet and pamper under the name of ‘ interests,’ and to show the vast and unmixed good capable of being realized by national and honest legislation. We regard the evidence given before this committee by Mr. Macgregor, Mr. G. R. Porter, and the late Mr. James Deacon Hume, as constituting one of the most important contributions ever made to the free-trade cause. That such opinions as those expressed by the gentlemen should be the result to which men are led by years of laborious service in the working department of the Board of Trade, is, to say the least, a most magnificent presumption of the soundness of free-trade principles. Nobody can charge these witnesses with ‘ theory,’ ‘ abstraction,’ and ‘ visionary speculation;’ and the natural bias of official habit and prejudice would have been in favour of the established system. Yet we find these are the men who are not only the most vigorous and unsparing in their condemnation of the restrictive system, but the boldest in their plans of reform, and the most sanguine and ‘ utopian’ in their anticipation of the advantages of every kind—fiscal, commercial, and social—to be reaped by the unreserved and fearless application of the principles of

commercial freedom. The evidence, in particular, of Mr. J. D. Hume, 'a gentleman whose loss' Sir Robert Peel 'is sure we must all sincerely deplore'—is especially interesting. It reads like that of a man who had learned to detest most cordially the system in whose administration he had grown grey (he had been forty-nine years at the Customs and at the Board of Trade)—who had long been disgusted and indignant at its injustice, absurdity, wastefulness, and suicidal policy—had bitterly felt his impotence to redress abuses of which every month's additional experience had more clearly shown him the mischievous and destructive qualities—and was delighted, at last, in having an opportunity of throwing off official reserve, and coming out publicly to speak his mind. The labours of this Import Duties Committee form a peculiarly interesting epoch in the history of the free-trade question. Their report was first unheeded, then ridiculed, then angrily denounced. But afterwards it began to be quoted as an authority; and it is already sufficiently clear that its doctrines are eventually destined for the statute-book. It made a "groove" in which the course of our future commercial legislation must inevitably flow. The whig Budget of 1841, was the first fruits of the principles now for the first time placed authoritatively on record before Parliament and the public. Since its rejection we have had two new tariffs more or less leavened with these principles. The very men whom the 'interests' combined to lift into power, expressly for the defence of their monopolies, had no choice but to accept the doctrines of free trade, and of common sense, as heir looms of office.

"The one great principle brought out most distinctly by the Import Duties Committee of 1840—set in the boldest relief by their report, and still more by the official witnesses they examined, and since become thoroughly familiar to the public mind, though yet waiting for its legislative recognition—is the broad generic difference between *two sorts of taxes*, which have been from time immemorial jumbled together in our tariff, and confirmed by popular ignorance or heedlessness, but are in reality as opposite in their respective natures as light and darkness:—viz., taxes for *revenue* and taxes for *protection*; taxes paid into the exchequer in direct money disbursements, and taxes paid to particular individual classes, in the shape of an artificially enhanced price of the commodities in which those individuals or classes deal; in other words, *public taxes* and *private taxes*. The difference—rather, the contrariety—between these two sorts of taxes was now brought plainly out before the public eye, in a way intelligible to every child of average capacity, and illustrated with ample variety of practical detail. It was shown that the British Custom House, though nominally one establishment, performs in fact two functions that are not only distinct but contradictory—levying money directly and openly for the public service of the



state, and also levying money, indirectly and furtively, to the detriment of the state, for the private pockets of certain favoured individuals and classes. It was likewise shown that the indirect and furtive private taxation, far exceeds in amount the whole sum of the public taxation of the country—rendering, of course, the burden of the public taxes so much the more onerous, and their collection more difficult. Also, that the incidental operation of these private taxes, in diverting capital and industry from their natural channels, limiting trade, relaxing the demand for labour, and abridging its remuneration, is beyond measure more mischievous than their pressure as a pecuniary impost. And, moreover, that the individuals and classes for whose supposed benefit these private taxes are levied, are, on the whole and in the long run, nothing the better, but very much the worse, for the oppression and impoverishment of the rest of the community.”

A movement of another kind had a like unpromising beginning, and a like result in more widely spreading the doctrines of free trade. The lecturers of the League were diligently employed in various parts of the kingdom, some in the great towns instructing intelligent audiences in the application of the principles of political economy, and others making popular appeals to the working classes in smaller towns and villages. Useful as this agency was, and zealous and able as the lecturers were in their several capacities, it became obvious that another class of labourers were needed in the wide field. When application was made for a free-trade missionary, I suggested that members of the Council of the League should occasionally go forth, and offered myself as a volunteer when we had nobody else to send. In this way I had attended several meetings in my own neighbourhood; and at the meeting of the delegation in London, finding that Mr. Beadon, of Taunton, and several other gentlemen had in like manner visited in towns of their neighbourhood, I strenuously recommended the example to be followed by the delegates in their various localities. In May I was requested by my colleagues of the council to attend a meeting of the Glasgow Anti-Corn-Law Association in that city, and I took the opportunity of urging upon its



members the origination of a similar mode of agitation. In the course of the year I attended some ten or a dozen of meetings held in towns near Manchester, and towards its close there was a demand for the services of other members of the council, whose ready eloquence, perfect mastery of the subject, and their influential station in our commercial and manufacturing community, gave weight to their teachings.

On the 30th of November, a crowded meeting was held in Warrington, at which were present, as deputies from their respective Anti-Corn-Law Associations, Mr. Cobden, Mr. W. Rawson, and Mr. John Brooks, of Manchester, and Mr. Lawrence Heyworth, of Liverpool. Amongst the audience were a number of chartists, and their presence gave a turn to the proceedings which was exceedingly encouraging to the friends of the free-trade movement, for it showed that a fearless and uncompromising course of argument, expressed in a conciliatory spirit, would ensure the respect of a body of men, who, in their zeal for the charter, were apt to forget what was due to others who demanded a more immediately practicable measure of reform. The chairman, Mr. Holbrook Gaskell, introduced the deputation, and then Mr. Rawson made a sensible short speech. Mr. Brooks followed in a mingled strain of good argument and familiar and amusing illustration. Mr. Heyworth characterised the Corn Law as operating to make the poor still poorer, and the rich still richer, and said that the remedy lay in making a proper use of the elective franchise. An intelligent-looking man, named Travis, rose and proposed a resolution, uniting opposition to the Corn Laws with the six points of the charter, but arguing that the repeal of those laws would throw land out of cultivation. Mr. Rawson ably showed the fallacy of Travis' argument, and drew from him the admission that he only opposed repeal as a single measure. Mr. Heyworth said that the manufacturers had

no power to prevent the reduction of wages. It was want of work and the consequent competition of unemployed men that reduced wages. Mr. Cobden, of whom my fear had been that he was a little too refined for the rough work of a popular meeting, now gave evidence that he possessed, in the highest degree, the power of arguing to the plainest understanding, and conciliating the most adverse audience. He did not skulk the question but vigorously grappled with it at once, and by a clear explanation of the principles which regulate wages, and an appeal to the experience of all present that their condition was better when food was plentiful and cheap, than when it was scarce and dear, carried the whole meeting with him, and when the resolution was put, there was not a single hand held up for it but that of the mover. A motion made by Mr. Eskrigge pledging the electors present to vote for no candidate for the representation of the borough who was not favourable to the repeal of the Corn Law was then put and carried, the only dissentient being the mover of the rejected resolution.

On Monday, the 21st December, a similar meeting was held at Macclesfield, attended by Mr. Cobden, Mr. W. Rawson, Mr. J. Brooks, and Mr. W. Evans, as a deputation from the League. The result was the formation of an Anti-Corn Law Association which should disclaim all protection to manufactures. The agitation for free trade had been, to a certain degree, suppressed in Macclesfield, by the propagation of the notion that the silk manufacture of the place would be endangered by its adoption. In reference to these two meetings, the first of hundreds of similar assemblages throughout the island, where Cobden and his compatriots popularized the philosophical doctrine of the economists, I remarked at the time that "the most important results are likely to follow when men take up a great public question with the same spirit of determination in which they pursue their own private

affairs—when, in short, our merchants and manufacturers turn free-trade missionaries, there can be no doubt about the triumph of their cause.” The year 1840 closed with proof that there was a demand for missionary work, and that there were men well able to perform it.

Another influential agency had now its origination. Two great banquets had been given in January. It was found that mothers, wives, and daughters, took a deep interest in the question which so much engrossed the attention of sons, husbands, and brothers. A lady, eighty years of age, told me that in her daily prayers for daily bread she also prayed for a blessing on the good work of Richard Cobden, and of all who were labouring that the afflicted poor should enjoy, in their humble homes, an abundance of the gifts which God had bestowed for the use of man. Thousands of female hearts beat indignantly at the thought that food should not be had where it could be had, while millions were in a state bordering upon starvation. Were the frigid rules of artificial society to exclude women from an agitation widely to diffuse the benefits of “plenty and cheapness?” On Thursday night, October 29th, the Corn Exchange, in Manchester, was handsomely decorated for a tea party, at which more than eight hundred and fifty attended, a considerable portion of the company consisting of ladies. The following presided at the various tables:—

Mrs. W. Rawson, Mrs. John Brooks, Mrs. Brotherton, Mrs. Cobden, Mrs. Kershaw, Mrs. T. Walker, Mrs. W. Evans, Mrs. Lewis, Mrs. J. Ashworth, Mrs. Harbottle, Mrs. Burton, Miss Hanmer, Mrs. Jackson, Miss Stephens, Miss C. Perkins, Mrs. W. Mather, Mrs. Taylor, Mrs. Bryden, Miss M. and Miss H. Horner, Mrs. J. Taylor, Mrs. E. Evans, Miss Mary Prentice, Mrs. Phythian, Mrs. Antrobus, Mrs. Greaves, Mrs. James Boyle, Mrs. Whitlow, Mrs. Wood, Mrs. E. Hall, Mrs. Rawson, Mrs. Caldecut, Mrs. E. Perkins, Mrs. Ellis, Mrs. J. Gal-  
loway, Miss M. A. Carr, Mrs. Watkin, Mrs. Scot, Mrs. W. Perkins, Miss Nodal, Mrs. G. Macintyre, Mrs. Armitage, Mrs. Dean, Mrs. G. Wilson, Mrs. Slack, Mrs. Leatherbarrow, Mrs. James Howie, Mrs. Nicholson, Mrs. Deaville, Mrs. Rawsthorne, Mrs. Hutchinson, Miss Hall, Miss Knowles, Mrs. David Ainsworth, Miss E. Leete, Mrs. Wood,

Miss Shepherd, Mrs. C. Mather, Miss M. Robinson, Mrs. Heywood, Mrs. W. Besley, Mrs. H. Vickers, Mrs. Jones, and Mrs. Goode.

The speakers on this brilliant occasion were the chairman, Mr. Mark Philips, his colleague in the representation of Manchester Mr. R. Hyde Greg, Mr. Brotherton (member for Salford), J. B. Smith, John Brooks, Rich. Cobden, Sir Thomas Potter, Joseph Cheshire Dyer, and Lawrence Heyworth, of Liverpool. The speeches throughout breathed a spirit of high hope and firm determination. This was the commencement of a co-operation, in which the ladies rendered effectual service to a cause endeared to them by the full confidence that it was the cause of humanity and justice. I offer no apology for the course they took, for I never had the smallest doubt of its perfect propriety and its perfect consistency with the softer characteristics of female virtue ; but I subjoin M. Frederic Bastiat's eloquent vindication of the ladies of England, as a sufficient answer to any unmanly charge that has been made, or that may be made, of any want of feminine delicacy in thus taking the part of the poor and needy :—

“ Since M. Kohl has spoken of the participation of the English ladies in the work of the League, I hope a few reflections on this subject will not be found out of place. I doubt not that the reader is surprised, and perhaps scandalised, to see woman appearing in these stormy debates. Woman seems to lose her grace in risking herself in this scientific *mêlée*, bristling with the barbarous words *tariffs*, *salaries*, *profits*, *monopolies*. What is there in common between dry dissertations and that ethereal being, that angel of the soft affections, that poetical and devoted nature, whose destiny it is solely to love and to please, to sympathise and to console ?

“ But, if woman does become alarmed at the dull syllogism and cold statistics, she is gifted with a marvellous sagacity, with a promptitude and certainty of appreciation, which make her detect, at once, on what side a serious enterprise sympathises with the tendencies of her own heart. She has comprehended that the effort of the League is a cause of justice and of reparation towards the suffering classes ; she has comprehended that almsgiving is not the only form of charity. We are ready to succour the unfortunate, say they ; but that is no reason why the law should make unfortunates. We are willing to feed those who are



hungry, to clothe those who are cold, but we applaud efforts which have for their object the removal of the barriers which interpose between clothing and nakedness, between subsistence and starvation.

"And, besides, is not the part which the English ladies have taken in the work of the League in perfect harmony with the mission of woman in society? There are fêtes, soirées, given to the *free-traders*;—eclat, warmth, and life are communicated by their presence to those great oratorical jousts in which the condition of the masses is discussed;—a magnificent prize is held out to the most eloquent orator, or to the most indefatigable defender of liberty.

"A philosopher has said, 'A people has only one thing to do, in order to develope in its bosom every virtue, every useful energy. It is simply to *honour what is honourable, and to condemn what is contemptible.*' And who is the natural dispenser of shame and of glory? Woman; woman, gifted with a tact so unerring for discriminating the morality of the end, the purity of the motive, the convenience of the method; woman, who, a simple spectator of our social struggles, is always in possession of an impartiality too often foreign to our sex; woman, whose sympathy, sordid interest, or cold calculation, never ices over—the sympathy for what is noble and beautiful; woman, in fine, who forbids by a tear, and commands by a smile.

"In former times the ladies crowned the conqueror of the tourney. Valour, address, clemency, became popularised by the intoxicating sound of their applause. In those times of trouble and of violence, in which brutal force overrode the feeble and the defenceless, it was a good thing to encourage the union of the generosity which is found in the courage and loyalty of the knight, with the rude manners of the soldier.

"What! because the times are changed; because the age is advanced; because muscular force has given place to moral energy; because injustice and oppression borrow other forms, and strife is removed from the field of battle to the conflict of ideas, shall the mission of woman be terminated? Shall she always be restricted to the rear to the social movement? Shall it be forbidden to her to exercise over new customs her benignant influence, or to foster under her regard the virtues of a more elevated order which modern civilisation has called into existence?

"No! this cannot be. There is no point in the upward movement of humanity at which the empire of woman stops for ever. As civilisation transforms and elevates itself, this empire must be transformed and elevated with it, not annihilated;—there would then be an inexplicable void in the social harmony, and in the providential order of things. In our days it pertains to woman to decree to mortal virtues,



to intellectual power, to enlightened philanthropy, those inestimable prizes, those irresistible encouragements, which they formerly reserved for the valour of the warrior alone. Let another seek the ridiculous side of this interference of woman in the new life of the age. I can only see its serious and touching side. Oh! if woman would but cast on political abjectness that poignant contempt with which she formerly withered military cowardice! if she had for him who traffics in a vote, for him who betrays a trust, for him who deserts the cause of truth and justice, some of that mortal irony with which, in other times, she would have overwhelmed the felon knight who had abandoned the lists or purchased his life at the price of his honour, our conflict could not offer that spectacle of demoralisation and of baseness which saddens elevated hearts, jealous of the glory and dignity of their country!

“And yet there exist men, devoted of heart, of powerful intelligence, but who, at the sight of intrigue everywhere triumphant, surround themselves with a veil of reserve and of pride. One sees them giving way to envious mediocrity, extinguishing themselves in a mournful agony, discouraged and discontented. Oh! it is for the heart of woman to understand these chosen natures. If the most disgusting baseness has falsified all the springs of our institutions; if a base cupidity, not content to reign without a rival, with greater effrontery erects itself into a system; if an atmosphere of lead weighs down our social life, perhaps the cause is to be sought in the fact, that woman has not yet taken possession of the mission which Providence has assigned to her.”

During the year, the executive council of the League had been busily but noiselessly engaged. No fewer than 763 petitions, with 175,840 signatures, had been sent to the Commons, and 22, with 18,003 signatures to the Lords. An active correspondence had been opened with every borough where there was any probability of influencing the return of free-trade members; a million and a quarter of hand-bills and tracts had been distributed, and 20,000 of “*The Anti-Corn-Law Almanack*,” 330,000 copies of *The Anti-Corn-Law Circular* had been circulated; application had been made to the clergy, and to all the corporations and all the poor-law guardians in the kingdom, to join in the movement; and invitations to form anti-corn-law associations had been sent far and wide. The lecturers,

also, had been earnestly at work throughout the length breadth of the land, and had delivered more than eight hundred lectures in the principal towns of Buckinghamshire, Cheshire, Cambridge, Cornwall, Cumberland, Devon, Dorset, Derby, Durham, Essex, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Huntingdonshire, Kent, Lancashire, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Middlesex, Norfolk, Nottinghamshire, Northumberland, Northamptonshire, Suffolk, Sussex, Staffordshire, Shropshire, Somersetshire, Surrey, Worcestershire, Westmorland, Wilts, and Yorkshire, besides forty-nine places in Scotland, twenty-four in Ireland, and thirty-two in Wales. This was an extensive agency, but it still needed extension. By the end of the year, arrangements had been made for a movement upon electoral districts, and several members of the council had already become missionaries to places asking for instruction, and numerous invitations had been received for such visits; instructive tracts had been prepared; and it had been resolved greatly to increase the publications of the League. The preparations were formidable, for it was felt that the opposition to be encountered was formidable. A nation had to be educated in the true principles of political economy—a nation had to be convinced of the folly and injustice of its past commercial policy—and “stout hearts” set themselves determinedly to climb the “steep hill.”

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE CAMPAIGN OF 1841.

Thrice over had the League declared that it would support no candidate for a seat in Parliament who would not pledge himself to vote for a total repeal of the Corn Law. "Thrice the brinded cat hath mewed," said scoffing unbelievers. The whig administration had declared in favour of a moderate fixed duty. Would there be no favour shown to them or their adherents—no preference given to them, going so far on the right road, over the thoroughly obstructive? But there was no *promise* of a moderate fixed duty, no declaration that ministers would give earnest battle for a moderate fixed duty, not even an avowal of the meaning of *moderate*. Mr. Labouchere was in favour, he said, of eight shillings, but was willing to make it higher as a *compromise*. The moderate fixed duty might be twelve shillings—might be sixteen shillings—for anything that the Leaguers knew. Were all their labour of instruction—all their declaration of a principle incapable of modification—to be thrown away for this miserable consummation? The cry was raised, "you will let the tories in;" the entreaty was resorted to, "relax your rule in our favour;" and cunning officials, thinking that what had been would be, said "their bark is worse than their bite has ever been." The time came to try the sincerity of the Leaguers—to try whether party predilection or principle would prevail.

Mr. Finch, one of the members for Walsall, having signified his intention to retire from Parliament, the two parties in the borough—for there, as in most boroughs, there were only two parties organized—soon found a candidate each. The tories invited Mr. Gladstone, the son of Mr. John Gladstone, of Liverpool, a young gentleman fresh from the university. The liberals invited a young man, a cornet in the Guards, who had the merit of being brother to Lord Lyttelton, and nephew to Earl Spencer. The Council of the League, acting on their thrice affirmed resolution, resolved to send a deputation to Walsall to invite the electors, and especially the members of the Anti-Corn-Law Association there, to put the pledge of total repeal to both the candidates, and Mr. Wm. Rawson and myself were appointed to that duty, and to take with us Mr. Acland, one of our lecturers, whose ready eloquence and electioneering experience might be found useful to aid either of the candidates who would declare in favour of free trade in corn. We arrived in Walsall just in time to attend a meeting at which, for the first time, Mr. Lyttelton addressed the electors. His speech was that of a very young man who had been schooled to utter a few common-places, of a seemingly liberal tone, without a single definite declaration of principle. At the close of his address, Mr. Acland told him in an under tone that a deputation was there from the League, for the purpose of ascertaining the opinions of the candidates as to the total repeal of the Corn Law, and said they would not press him for an immediate answer, as the question was one which ought to receive a very deliberate consideration; and he, therefore, suggested that the answer should be reserved until the next day. Mr. Bolton, of Wolverhampton, the law agent for the candidate, not trusting his principal to reply, loudly asked if the League would not prefer Mr. Lyttelton, who was a liberal, and friendly to *revision* of the Corn Laws, to Mr. Gladstone, who was a tory and a

supporter of protection ? Mr. Acland said : "Do you ask me publicly before the electors ?" Mr. Bolton said he did. Mr. Acland said he could only answer for himself ; but there were two respectable members of the Council of the League who could answer for that body. He went on to state the avowed principles of the League, and to show the benefits it anticipated from free trade in corn, his remarks being received with marked applause from an audience which had been silent during the delivery of Mr. Lyttelton's school-boy address. "Do not," said he in conclusion, "take my exposition of the principles of the League. Mr. Prentice and Mr. Rawson can state them authoritatively, and Mr. Lyttelton will be able then to tell you whether he agrees with them." I felt that we had no right to address a meeting expressly called to hear Mr. Lyttelton, but the invitation, or rather challenge, had come from his own agent, with his assent, and I accepted it. I stated the original constitution of the League, which was to obtain total repeal, and referred to the resolution of the delegates in London, that they would not give their support to any candidate, whatever his politics might be, who was not in favour of repeal. I said that as a reformer myself, I should be glad if Mr. Lyttelton, a professed liberal, declared his opinion to be in accordance with that resolution, that we might recommend him to the members of the Anti-Corn-Law Association in the borough ; but if he did not, the League would certainly give the electors an opportunity of recording their votes in favour of a repealer, without any regard to the political opinions of the candidates then in the field. I concluded by saying that if the electors wished to hear, more authoritatively, the principles of the League, they would perhaps hear Mr. Rawson, its treasurer, and one of its earliest members. By this time Mr. Lyttelton and his law agent seemed to repent their public invitation to answer the question of the latter, and Mr. Rawson being called for expressed his unwillingness



to appear as opposing any man professing liberal opinions, and his hope that Mr. Lyttelton would declare in favour of repeal, and thus allow him to aid in his election ; but that if he could not, and if the electors of Walsall could not find a suitable candidate in their own town, or their own neighbourhood, there were abundance of men of talent and high principle who would be glad to give them their services in procuring a repeal of laws which were rapidly reducing the borough, and the country, and its industrious population, to utter ruin. Mr. Rawson's short address was received with a warmth of applause which showed that he had an audience of decided opponents of monopoly ; and the meeting separated without a single remark from Mr. Lyttelton, his law-agent, or any of his friends.

Next morning the cause of the silence of those who had previously been his supporters soon became obvious. He had been invited on the belief that he was a corn-law repealer, and several of the most active even on his committee, amongst whom was Mr. Joseph Hickin, afterwards secretary to the League, declared to him and to us, that they could not vote for him unless he unequivocally pledged himself to vote for total repeal. Our deputation, having been joined by Mr. William Walker, Mr. Kettle, and Mr. George Wynn, of Wolverhampton, went out amongst the influential electors, and ascertained, beyond a doubt, that there was a sufficient number of corn-law repealers to dictate their own terms to the liberal candidate. In the meantime a placard had been put forth calling on the electors to withhold their promises until they heard an address from Mr. Acland, in the evening, by which time it was expected that explicit answers would be given by the candidates to the question which had now been put to each of them by the deputation.

In the afternoon we received the answers of the candidates. Mr. Gladstone trusted that he would not be consi-

dered wanting in courtesy to us as gentlemen, being strangers in Walsall, in declining to enter upon the subject of the Corn Law. We knew what that meant as much as if he *had* entered upon the subject. Mr. Lyttelton said: "I will vote for the total repeal of the Corn Laws when I have ascertained that the interests of the country require it, and therefore shall not object to vote for an immediate inquiry into the effects of these laws." We told the electors around us that they had better try to find some one who had already ascertained that the interests of the country required repeal, and it seemed that a number of them had spoken to him in the same strain, for, just before the time when Mr. Acland had to address the meeting that had been advertised, the deputation were requested to meet Mr. Lyttelton's committee, which met in the same inn, and they were informed that he would not stand against the feelings in favour of the total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws, and that, being unwilling to divide the reformers in the borough, he would at once retire. The announcement was made by Mr. Acland to the next meeting of the electors, amidst great cheering, and great satisfaction was expressed that the field was now open to a thorough repealer. Mr. Rawson addressed the meeting very effectively, and I explained to it that the operations at Walsall were in perfect accordance with the plan of the League, which would everywhere strive to give electors an opportunity of recording their votes in favour of a repealer, and I earnestly recommended them to select a townsman, or near neighbour, whose interests were identified with their own. Before the meeting was over there was originated a requisition to Mr. Charles Forster, a townsman, and signed by most of the electors present, including some of those who had been the most active and influential of Mr. Lyttelton's supporters.

On Wednesday morning the requisition was presented

to Mr. Forster. He agreed to stand, an active canvass on his behalf was commenced, and the free traders and reformers felt confident that he would be returned. The hall was again filled in the evening to hear the address of the candidate, but at nine o'clock the gentlemen who were to have accompanied him arrived and stated that Mr. Forster's father, a conservative, had positively forbidden him to stand, and that Mr. Forster, to avoid the misery and dissension that might arise in the family, had earnestly requested that his name should be withdrawn. This naturally caused deep disappointment; but the spirit of the repealers soon rallied, and it was resolved that an earnest request should be forwarded to the Council of the League to find a candidate from amongst their number. I arrived in Manchester early next morning, a meeting was instantly convened, and it was resolved that, although none of the members should be proposed to the electors, Mr. J. B. Smith should be requested to proceed to Walsall to confer with them, and, when they had made their choice, to do all in his power to aid them in returning an opponent of the bread tax.

This movement on the part of the League, although in perfect consistency with its original constitution, and its reiterated resolution as to the course which its members would pursue at elections threw the whole ministerial press into the wildest hysterics. Not one word had that press to say against a movement of that body at Sudbury, where a tory member had been unseated. On the contrary, there was great rejoicing at the extinction of a *tory* vote, and great praise of the vigour by which it was effected. But when the movement drove, or appeared to drive, from the field a *whig* candidate, closely related to the whig Lords Althorp, Lyttelton, and Hatherton, and consequently enjoying the sympathies of the whig aristocracy, the clamour was both loud and deep, and the League, and more especially Mr. Rawson and myself, were loaded with

unmeasured abuse from the *Morning Chronicle* and the *Globe*, down to the *Manchester Guardian* and a host of provincial whig journals, which, professing to love free trade very much, loved whiggism much more. In the *Manchester Guardian*, of the 2nd of January, I find the following passage, in reference to what is called the *escapade* at Walsall, and copy it as a specimen of the sort of stuff which, in all ages, men of mere expediency throw in the way of an assertion of principle :—

“ Most of our readers are aware, that the town is blessed by the presence and the labours of a number of gentlemen who call themselves philosophical reformers, and who profess to regulate all their political conduct by a strict adherence to certain dogmas which they call principles, without paying the slightest regard to expediency, or accepting the slightest compromise with persons of different opinions. Now, all this sounds very fine in theory; but when reduced to practice, whether in politics or the ordinary business of life, it is not found to be a remarkably successful course of proceeding. It is undoubtedly true, that the nearest route from one place to another is by a straight line, but if a coachman, who regulated his conduct by principle and scorned expediency, were to endeavour to drive in a straight line from Manchester to London, his plan would end very much like most of the schemes of our political philosophers; he would either upset the coach, or stick fast in a ditch, before he had completed half a mile of his journey.”

The obvious object of all this was to create a schism in the League, now beginning to exercise a power which might be very dangerous to men in office, to whom “ certain dogmas called principles ” are not often acceptable. If a portion of that body could be induced to declare for ministers and their “ moderate ” fixed duty, while another portion called “ impracticables ” demanded total repeal, the Association would be broken up or rendered powerless. The League, however, adhered to its declared constitution and justified the proceedings of its deputation to Walsall. On the 4th January Mr. John Ballantyne, its secretary, was directed to write to the *Morning Chronicle*, that in putting to Mr. Lyttelton the test of immediate repeal, “ the Council had but fulfilled



its duty, in carrying into effect the unanimous resolution of the delegates, three times reiterated in London and Manchester, and adopted as the fundamental object of the League," and to say that it "would continue in the same course which had hitherto been followed with such satisfactory results." Numerous anti-corn-law associations separately testified their approbation of the course pursued by the League, and in about ten days addresses to the electors of Walsall, recommending the election of a thoroughly free-trade candidate were voted at meetings held at Rochdale, Kendal, Carlisle, Mitcham, Nantwich, Stourbridge, Bolton, Chorley, Great Torrington, Loughborough, Macclesfield, Uxbridge, Longtown, Stalybridge, Edinburgh, Bridgenorth, Sunderland, Bradford (Wilts), Kidderminster, Leek, Congleton, and Liverpool; and thus a movement which, to those who disliked the "dogmas called principles," seemed to promise the dissolution of the League, or to render it powerless, was the means of establishing it more firmly in the confidence of the public, as giving an assurance that it would not abate one jot or tittle from its declared purpose, whatever temptations a temporarizing expediency might offer.

Mr. Smith, finding that the electors were unable to find any local candidate likely to be successful, yielded to their urgent solicitations to come forward himself, and, until the time of election, Walsall was a school in which he, Richard Cobden, and other free traders taught the principles which they had undertaken to teach to the nation. Amongst their opponents was Mr. Forster, the father of the gentleman who would have been candidate and member but for the exercise of parental authority. He was a banker, and exercised all the influence which his position gave him to procure the return of Mr. Gladstone; while the whig Hatherton and Lyttelton families held aloof from the contest, the liberalism of Mr. Smith not being sufficient recommendation to overcome their distaste to his



ultra notions concerning the landowners' monopoly. At the close of the poll, on the 30th of January, the numbers stood :—

For Mr. Gladstone, ..... 363

For Mr. Smith, ..... 336

Mr. Smith polled twenty more votes than had carried Mr. Finch at the previous election. At the previous registration, the tories had put seventy additional voters on the list, by paying their rates for them. The majority, however, had not been gained after Mr. Smith came into the field, but from the pledges obtained by Mr. Gladstone when he had no better opponent than a young cornet of the guards, who was totally unable to give expression even to the opinions which his friends advised him to state. It was Mr. Lyttelton who gave the triumph to Mr. Gladstone. When he retired he had received only 162 pledges, while his opponent had received 250. At seven in the evening of the election day, Mr. Smith addressed an immense assemblage, not with the despondency of a rejected candidate, but with the triumphant tones of one who felt that he had contended for a great principle, which was certain, ultimately, to prevail. His speech produced a powerful sensation, and when he took leave of his auditory, a great portion of them were in tears.

Ministers might have taken a useful lesson from Walsall. They might have told their supporters that they could no longer rely on whig aristocratic influence, but must give to the electors, in addition, some *principle* to contend for. They might have said, "Send us a supporter, by all means, but find one who will carry the electors with him. These anti-corn-law men are everywhere, and should not be put at defiance." But they chose to sit "between two stools;" they roused the fiercest opposition by their proposed modification of the Corn Laws, without gaining any confidence or support from the free traders. They enraged their foes, and did not conciliate those who were disposed to be their

friends. I did not hesitate to prognosticate their fate :—  
“ They have alienated all the decided reformers by their uncalled-for declaration of finality ; they have alienated the dissenters by refusing to rescue them from the exactions of a dominant church ; they have alienated the great majority of all who are in trade, be they employers or employed, by the avowal of the premier, that he thinks men must be ‘ mad ’ who demand permission to exchange their surplus manufactures for the surplus produce of other lands ; they have alienated the friends of peace by unnecessary and unjust interference in the affairs of other nations ; they have alienated the friends of economy by a profuse expenditure, which calls for the imposition of new taxes. *On whom can they fall back in the event of a general election ?* To what principle can they appeal in the frequent single elections occasioned by the acceptance of the Chiltern Hundreds by members tired out with attending debates in a house which talks and does nothing ? The cry of ‘ Keep out the tories,’ has had its day, and is no longer available. The people are no longer to be brought to the aid of men who will do nothing for them. If, therefore, ministers do not bring forward measures of substantial reform—not trifling modifications of existing evils, but measures calculated to promote the comfort and happiness of millions—the *people will leave them to settle disputes with their opponents as they best may* ; and if, then, the tories come in, the whigs will only have themselves to blame.” Four months afterwards “ they appealed to the people,” and the people left them to settle with their opponents as they best could ; and an additional affirmation was given of the truth of the old proverb concerning the two stools. The events of that year, 1841, were pregnant of instruction, but ministers saw little in them to disturb their self-complacent possession of office.

At the close of the preceding year, an agitation bearing upon Parliamentary boroughs had been commenced. In

furtherance of this movement a numerous meeting was held on the 2nd of January, in the New Temperance Hall, Bolton, and more than eight hundred of the persons attending, including many ladies, had taken tea together. Mr. James Arrowsmith, the mayor, presided, and amongst the guests at the principal table were Mr. P. Ainsworth, one of the members for the borough (the other was a protectionist), Mr. John Brooks, Mr. J. C. Dyer and his son, and Mr. Rawson, jun., of Manchester, Mr. Lawrence Heyworth, of Liverpool, and Mr. and Mrs. E. Ashworth, Mr. H. Ashworth, Mr. Robert Heywood, Mr. Jos. Ainsworth, Mr. C. J. Darbishire, Mr. Thomas Thomasson, the Rev. Mr. Fraser, and the Rev. Mr. Jones, of Bolton. Mr. John Brooks, the first speaker, made effective use of the Prayer Book:—"Being a member of the church he read his prayers as well as the bishops who voted for dear bread, and in his prayer book he found amongst others a prayer which every clergyman must repeat with his lips, if it did not come from his heart, this prayer: 'Oh God, heavenly Father, whose gift it is that the rain doth fall, and the earth is fruitful, behold, we beseech thee, the afflictions of thy people, and grant that the scarcity and dearth which we now justly suffer for our iniquity, may through thy goodness be more mercifully turned into cheapness and plenty.' Here were the bishops and clergy praying for cheapness and plenty, and then, out of the church, turning their prayers into mockery, by upholding the men who were the cause of scarcity and dearth."

Mr. Ainsworth said the country could have no better security for the preservation of peace than by adopting free trade. Mr. Edmund Ashworth gave a deplorable account of the state of Bolton. A number of gentlemen who had visited the working classes there had found 300 families, consisting of 1,400 individuals, whose whole income did not amount to more than £130 per week, or, deducting rents, £105 11s., which was only equal to 15½d. per head,

per week. Out of 3,200 houses in the parish they found 409 empty; that of the houses occupied 1,000 were found tenanted by families who had only 18d. per week to live upon, 1,200 whose income was under 2s., and nearly 1,300 whose income was under 2s. 6d. per head per week. Of these poor people 1,601 had only 500 beds among them, 582 of them sleeping three in a bed, 185 five in a bed, 78 six in a bed, 42 seven in a bed. In one place eight had only one between them, and 23 were wholly without a bed to rest upon! Mr. Dyer commented with deep indignation on the indifference of the law-makers to such distress, and Mr. H. Ashworth, Mr. C. J. Darbishire, Mr. L. Heyworth, and Mr. Thomasson proved by their speeches that they were fully competent to take a part in the great work of educating the people which had been recently originated.

On the 18th of February a meeting was held of the Manchester Anti-Corn-Law Association, which continued to keep up its separate organization, in the large room, Newall's Buildings. The chairman, Mr. J. B. Smith, after speaking of the necessity of taking urgent means to obtain their object, called upon Mr. George Wilson to read the annual report. That gentleman had not much appeared before the public during the agitation, but as a member of the executive council, and very frequently its chairman, had already rendered most effective service by his excellent administrative faculties, his capacity for arrangement and organization, his ready tact in moments of difficulty, his conciliatory manners, and the cheerful devotion of his time to the business of that committee. Having stated the proceedings of the preceding year, and that £40 remained of the £4,000 which had been subscribed, he congratulated the meeting on the prospect of a considerable number of ministers of religion joining the movement. Mr. Thomas Bazley, who had recently been boroughreeve of Salford, spoke hopefully of the effect to be produced



by the energy of the Association. "In every concern," he said, "I hear of fewer hands employed, and in every direction I hear of wages being reduced. Where then do we find the boasted advantages of the high price of food?" Amongst other resolutions moved was one by Mr. W. Rawson, that a copy of the *Anti-Corn-Law Circular* be sent to every clergyman in Manchester and Salford. I spoke at some length in seconding the motion, and stated that in Scotland the churches and chapels had been thrown open to Mr. Paulton, and that in my short excursions into Cheshire three places of worship had been at my service; there was good ground for hope when the question was no longer regarded as one of mere profit to particular classes, but as one of high religious and moral feeling among the people generally. Mr. Cobden, after attributing the failure of former movements against the Corn Law to the fear of "embarrassing the government," said:—

"There is no cry that will avail candidates at next election but that of 'no bread tax.' I appeal to our experience at Walsall for a confirmation of this fact. The humbler class of voters would not respond to the older cry of whig or tory, and the same was the case at East Surrey, but so effectually had repeal possessed itself of the people of Walsall, owing to the information circulated there on the subject by the members of the League, and more especially by the aid of our talented lecturer, Mr. Acland, that Smith was never once asked his political opinions. There was not one question put, either during his canvas or on the hustings as to whether he was whig or tory. In his address he never mentioned one word of his political opinions, and all the time he was there I believe not an individual put a question to him as to party politics. This is a remarkable fact, and there cannot be a doubt that at the general election, come when it may, the great rallying cry will be, 'no bread tax.' Mr. Acland is here, and I appeal to him, who has had much experience of public opinion, whether he thinks it would be possible for the lecturers to carry public opinion with them were they to recommend anything less than the full measure of justice—the total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws?"

Mr. Acland, thus appealed to, declared his conviction that it was only by standing on the rock of justice that he



could continue to beat off their opponents; no man that ever lived could prove that it was just to tax the food of the hungry; and he felt that so long as they stood on this principle, they rested on a basis that admitted the rights of all, rich and poor, the natural right of man to live by his honest industry, and to spend his wages in the market from whence he could have the best return. The following gentlemen were appointed the council of the Association for the ensuing year:—

PRESIDENT: J. B. Smith, Esq.

VICE-PRESIDENT; C. J. S. Walker, Esq.

TREASURER: Mr. Alderman Kershaw.

SECRETARY: Mr. John Ballantyne.

COUNCIL:

The Mayor.	James Edwards.	Holland Hoole.
Sir Thomas Potter, late Mayor.	Edward Evans.	Thomas Hopkins.
Joseph Adshead.	William Evans.	George Horsfield.
Elkanah Armitage.	Richard T. Evans.	James Howie.
James Ashworth.	W. D. Fullalove.	James Hudson.
Edmund Ashworth.	J. H. Fuller.	Isaac Hudson.
James Bake.	John Gadsby.	John Hyde.
J. R. Barnes.	William Goodier.	William Labrey.
Thomas Bazley.	J. S. Grafton.	John Leatherbarrow.
William Besley.	R. H. Greg, M.P.	Samuel Lees.
John Brewer.	H. H. Grounds.	William Lindon.
John Brooks.	Jeremiah Garnett.	William Lockett.
Robert Bunting.	George Hadfield.	F. Lowe.
Thomas Burgess.	Andrew Hall.	Henry Mc.Connell.
W. R. Callender.	Edward Hall.	John Macfarlane.
James Carlton.	James Hampson.	John Mallon.
Robert Chadwick.	Thomas Handley.	Henry Marsland.
James Chapman.	Thomas Harbottle.	Samuel Marsland.
Walter Clarke.	George Hargreaves.	Thomas Molineux.
Richard Cobden.	William Harvey.	James Murray.
Matthew Curtis.	Alexander Henry.	Joseph Nadin, jun.
Andrew Dalziel.	Edward Herford.	John Naylor.
S. D. Darbshire.	Joseph Heron.	Robert Nicholson.
J. C. Dyer.	John Higson.	William Nicholson.
James Eager, M.D.	Thomas Higson.	Aaron Nodal.
	Henry Hilton.	Philip Novelli.

John Ogden.	John Rostron.	William Woodcock.
J. S. Ormerod.	John Shuttleworth.	Absalom Watkin.
R. Owen.	S. H. Slack.	R. Webb.
Benjamin Pearson.	Robert Stuart.	George Wilson.
William Perkins.	Samuel Stocks.	Richard Wilson.
Robert N. Philips.	Isaac Shimwell.	W. B. Watkins.
John Potter.	Abraham Smith.	T. H. Williams.
T. B. Potter.	John Standring.	Henry Wadkin.
Archibald Prentice.	James Thompson.	W. Wardleworth.
Jonathan Rawson.	Charles Tysoe.	James Wigan.
Henry Rawson.	John Whitlow.	P. F. Willert.
William Rawson.	John Wilkinson.	James Worthington.
John Rawsthorne.	Samuel Watts.	

This was a numerous committee but not more numerous than the movement required. It comprised not only men of the first station in our community, but a great many who, if they could not contribute largely to the funds of the Association, could contribute what was equally valuable, work—earnest, continuous, gratuitous work. The time was coming when, in addition to the staff of lecturers, there was to be a heavy staff of clerks, but never, perhaps, had there been any association where so large a portion of the labour to be performed was without other remuneration than the consciousness of discharging a duty. Occasionally circumstances arose that required instant attention and instant work, and, on these emergencies, it was not uncommon to see thirty or forty persons, for weeks together, coming at five or six o'clock in the morning, and labouring until midnight as closely and earnestly as if their own existence depended upon the swiftness of their pens; while the executive committee, which was also the executive committee of the League, meeting at ten in the morning, had their work often extended over the whole of the day. If, therefore, Manchester, by the vote of a congress of the various separate associations, had the honour of directing the movement, there fell to it the larger share of unremitting toil.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### MOVEMENTS IN THE BOROUGHES.

On the 11th March a numerous meeting was held in the Manchester Town Hall, to consider the propriety of petitioning against the renewal of the Poor-Law Amendment Act. The speakers were principally conservatives, and some ultra-radicals were with them. I did not agree with them in their admiration of the old law, under which, in the agricultural districts, much tyranny was exercised, but I said then, with reference to the workhouse, I thought there might be some reason for doubting the propriety of giving relief to the able-bodied labourers in a country free from a heavy burden of taxation, and where there was a good demand for labour; but to talk of throwing a man on his own resources in a country where his very scanty earnings were taxed to the extent of one-fourth of the whole for the purposes of the government, and his bread to the extent of another fourth for the protection of the landowners, was absurd and wicked. The chairman said: "We are not here to discuss the Corn Laws;" to which my reply was: "Nor am I; but I am here to assert that to throw the working man entirely upon his own resources when government taxation and iniquitous monopolies take away one half of his earnings is a gross outrage."

At a meeting of the Manchester Chamber of Commerce, held on the 12th March, Mr. J. B. Smith in the chair, a

valuable report was presented from the directors "on the injurious effects of restriction on trade, and the necessity of immediate changes in our commercial policy, as proved by the report and evidence of the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Import Duties, during the last session of Parliament." The report was ordered to be printed as a pamphlet, and its wide circulation did much to direct public attention to the important evidence given by official men, of long experience and sound judgment, as to the injurious workings of our restrictive commercial policy. In the subsequent discussion Mr. John Shuttleworth, after referring to the important evidence of Mr. M'Gregor upon the heavy duties imposed upon articles of import, and which would be greatly increased in consumption under moderate duties, said: "There was another class of evils which originated not in the ignorance or incapacity of our legislators, but in their cupidity and selfishness. Amongst that class of evils was one which he was glad to see so forcibly dwelt on in the report, the Corn Laws, which presented the broadest and blackest features in the grievances of which they had to complain." Mr. John Brooks, who scarcely ever spoke without some observation which excited amusement by its humour, and afterthought by its truth, said, in reference to changes in trade, that the motion downwards was a *tumble* and all at once, but getting up again was a *scramble*, and a work of time and great difficulty. Mr. W. Read, at the request of the chairman, gave some particulars as to the adulterations of tobacco in consequence of the enormous duty, which amounted to 4s. per pound, while the manufactured article varied from 3s. 2d. to 2s. 2d., and some was sold by retail as low as 16d. a pound; Mr Stott, another tobacco-nist, frankly acknowledged that he could not afford to sell genuine tobacco, but was obliged to do as other people did. Mr. J. C. Dyer in the course of a very able speech exposed the absurdity of the assertion of the protectionists that a

low price of food caused low wages ; and Mr. Cobden was quite of opinion that the questions of free trade and the Corn Laws had made more progress during the last two years than they had during the whole seventy years after the publication of Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations," and proceeded to give a history of the progress of the United States, and to argue the mutual advantages that would result from the establishment of free commercial intercourse between the producers of food there and the manufacturers, employers, and employed, of our own country.

The Mayor of Manchester (Mr. W. Nield), in compliance with a requisition very numerously signed, had called a public meeting to be held in the Town Hall, on Friday, March 19th. The chartists—rather perhaps men professing to be chartists—had the walls covered with placards, not issued until the evening before the day of meeting, asking, "Why do these liberal manufacturers bawl so lustily for the repeal of the Corn Laws," and answering, "because, with the reduced price of corn, they will be enabled to reduce the wages of the working men, in order that they may compete with foreigners who live upon potatoes." To support this landlord fallacy, strangely and suspiciously re-echoed from Manchester, the working men were urged to "go in thousands" and "expose the canting hypocrites." In obedience to this call, a crowd of persons, who were recognised as belonging to the class of "physical-force" chartists, assembled considerably before the time appointed, who, the moment the doors were open, rushed into the hall, and on the motion of Mr. Elijah Dixon, seconded by Mr. E. Nightingale, resolved that the Rev. Mr. Scholefield should take the chair. The Mayor arriving immediately afterwards took the chair as a matter of course, and great confusion ensued. The mayor persisted firmly in keeping his place, and Mr. Scholefield having a chair placed for him on the reporters table, also



had the semblance of being chairman. With this double security for order Mr. Cobden addressed the meeting, and at once boldly grappled with the question which had been raised by the placards, and successfully demolished other fallacies put forth by the monopolists, demonstrating that the working classes had a deeper interest in the repeal of the Corn Laws than any other portion of the community. The Rev. W. M'Kerrow followed, and eloquently urged opposition to a tax upon the food of the people as a religious duty. The honour of leading the opposition was not confided to a townsman, but to Mr. M'Douall, a noted chartist lecturer, from Bury or its neighbourhood, who, while he acknowledged the Corn Law to be an evil, was lavish in his abuse of those who were labouring to procure its repeal, attributing their zeal to their desire to keep up "the hellish factory system," and to pull down the wages of the working men. He moved a resolution in favour of the charter. Several other noted chartists, some of them men who at any time would rather talk than work, having spoken in the same strain, Mr. Cobden rose very quietly to reply. He said the first and every successive speaker had denounced the Corn Law as unjust. Now, if he found an injustice anywhere, common sense told him to endeavour to put it down. What was the argument of his opponents? "Why no," said they, "if you put an end to this evil something else unjust will arise, and unless you will give a guarantee that nothing else unjust shall arise, we will not allow this to be put down." The resolution which had been proposed, condemnatory of the Corn Laws, was then put by the two chairman, the Mayor declaring that it was lost, and Mr. Scholefield that it was carried. The original resolution was then put and carried so decisively, that when the "contrary" was put, not a single hand was held up. Amongst the ministers of the gospel who were present, but prevented by the turn of the proceedings from

taking a part, were the Revs. Dr. Halley, F. Beardsall, J. L. Poore, J. Gwyther, and J. Birt.

A special meeting of the Town Council, of Manchester, was held on Wednesday, March 17th, to take the import duties into consideration. The speakers were Mr. John Shuttleworth, Mr. Thomas Hopkins, Mr. J. P. Westhead, Mr. Cobden, myself, and Mr. John Spencer, and a petition was agreed to in favour of a tariff in agreement with liberal principles of commercial policy. On Wednesday, March 31st, another special meeting of the council was held, at which Mr. Cobden brought forward a motion for the adoption of a petition praying for the repeal of the Corn and Provision Laws. He prefaced his speech by avowing his belief that the question was as much a local one as that of poor's rate, police rate, or any other local import, and that there were few in Manchester who were in favour of the law as it then stood, the only difference of opinion being as to the change which should be sought. On that point he felt he was the last person who ought to dogmatize, for when, five or six years back, he published his "England, Ireland, and America," he had stated that he had no more objection to a small fixed duty on corn than to a fixed duty on coffee or sugar, but some gentleman in London, a stranger to him but a friend to truth, wrote to him, drawing his attention to the difference that existed between levying a duty on an article grown at home, and one of foreign production only, and a little inquiry satisfied him that he was entirely wrong. Mr. Cobden went on to argue that a duty on corn pressed most heavily on the classes that were least able to bear it; that for every shilling of duty on corn imported, there was a shilling paid, and previously paid, to the grower in this country for his sole benefit; that every argument in favour of protecting the home growth of corn would equally apply to the home growth of cotton in hot-houses; that it would be better for farmers to have the duty on corn abolished at once than

reduced gradually, because he could come to a fresh arrangement with his landlord at once, instead of having to make one every year during the process of reduction ; and that there would be no "sudden inundation" of foreign corn under free trade, as the additional supply would scarcely ever exceed a fourth of the whole consumption. On these grounds he advocated the total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws ; and he would exhort those who had any fears as to the result to satisfy their minds as to what was *strictly just* in the case, and, having done so, to leave the consequences to the God of justice. Mr. John Mayson argued for repeal as a moral duty, and stated his belief that it would contribute greatly to the physical benefit and the moral advancement of the industrial classes. Mr. George Wilson denied that the agriculturists bore any burthen in which the other classes of the community did not bear their full share, and read some statements proving that the agricultural labourers were in a wretched condition notwithstanding the protection, which it was said was for their benefit. Mr. George Chappell having advocated gradual repeal for the sake of farmers, I spoke at some length in favour of its being immediate, were it only for the benefit of farmers themselves, who were deprived by the Corn Laws of any outlet for the employment of their sons. The farmer could not make a provision for his family unless he sent them out to engage in commercial pursuits, and if commerce continued in its depressed state, the farmers in England and Scotland would soon be reduced, like the same class in Ireland, to a state of destitution and beggary. Mr. Alderman Brooks said that the simple question was *what was right*, and that being ascertained, it should be gone for at once. Mr. Alderman Callender thought that every law should be for the benefit, not of the few but of the many ; and, therefore, was for the repeal of one which was selfishness personified. Mr. S. Stocks said that while there was much cry about

the vested interests of the landowners, the interests of the poor man, whose earnings were from five to fifteen shillings a week, should not be left out of consideration. The resolutions in favour of total repeal were passed unanimously.

Cobden was now beginning to be recognised as one of the most prominent leaders, out of Parliament, of the free-trade movement; and the free traders were now saying how desirable it was that he should be sent to represent their principles in the House of Commons. This was not acceptable to the old whig party. He was an unsafe man, they said; a man of ultra opinions could effect no good in the legislature; however popular he might be out of doors, it required a different kind of talent to make any impression in Parliament; he would soon find his level there. The usual reply to such talk was: "Yes he will find his level there, but it will be a higher level than he now stands upon—a higher level than nine-tenths of the members of the present House of Commons stand upon. He is not the mob orator. He is the same man in the stormy public meeting, as he is in the Town Council, the Chamber of Commerce, or the Conference of Delegates, where men of the highest intelligence are gathered together from all parts of the kingdom. He has every quality required for Parliament except rhetorical oratory, and, even on that point, his speaking, now that men look more for reason than florid rhetoric, will be found quite as effective as the best orator in the house."

It will be seen by the brief sketches I have given of discussions on the Corn Law, that while landlord fallacies were acutely examined and remorselessly demolished, the simple question was frequently put, "Is it just?" And the religious element was as often manifested as the politico-economical, and another question often asked was, "Is it right that man's law should intercept in its transit the food which God has provided for all his creatures?"



I thought that the Bible might as well be quoted as the "Wealth of Nations," and wrote the following, which, as one of the short tracts of the League, was widely circulated :

"THERE IS CORN IN EGYPT."

"We read in the earliest authentic record that has come down to modern times, that about nineteen hundred years before the Christian era, a Chaldean, having taken up his residence in Canaan, was exposed, along with all the people by whom he was surrounded, to a grievous famine. Being in possession of wealth he was not compelled to remain and starve, but enabled to remove into Egypt, which was not suffering under the same infliction; and we are told that Abram, for that was the name of the chief, 'went down to sojourn there,' there being abundance of corn in the annually irrigated valleys of the Nile. The Rev. Mathew Henry, of Chester, writing, about a hundred and forty years ago, a commentary upon the ancient record of these facts, says of this temporary migration of Abram: 'See how wisely God provides that there should be plenty in one place, when there was scarcity in another, that, as members of the great body' (the great family of mankind) 'we may not say to one another, 'I have no need of you.'

"How well the old Chester divine anticipated the most enlightened of political economists! It needed no elaborate process of reasoning to convince him that the abundance or super abundance in one quarter of the earth should go to mitigate the wants which were suffered in another, for he knew, that, in the general providence of God, there never was, and never would be, an insufficient supply of food for mankind. He knew that there never was a famine over all the earth at one time—that there never was a famine in one country without a corresponding increase of production in another; and, regarding all men as alike the objects of the Creator's care, he saw that the balance was easily and simply to be had by exchange. His religion told him that men *ought* thus to depend upon each other, and he regarded the mutual dependence as a proof of the wisdom of God, lest man, in his pride, should say to his brother, 'I have no need of thee.' Had Mathew Henry lived till now, how would he have been astonished at the doctrine that a whole community had better be reduced to starvation, than that, at any time, they should depend on their neighbours for a supply of food!

"The religious political economist—for religion teaches true wisdom by the shortest possible process—goes on to say: 'God's providence took care that there should be a supply in Egypt, and Abram's prudence made use of the opportunity; for *we tempt God, and do not trust him, if,*



*in the time of distress, we use not the means he has graciously provided for our preservation. We must not expect useless miracles.'*

"If a multitude of starving people were on one side of a brook, and on the other there was an abundance of corn for which there was no consumer, would it not be a tempting and a mistrusting of God, who had provided that superfluity, if they did not use the means he had graciously provided for their preservation—if they did not take of such things as they could spare, and give them in exchange for that for the lack of which they were on the brink of starvation? It would be the height of presumption and profanity if they looked for useless miracles—if they stood listlessly still and expected manna to be rained down from heaven, while before them lay the produce of an abundant harvest, and all that they had to do was to cross the brook and make an amicable bargain for a share?

"About two hundred years after the Chaldean chief had sought supply in Egypt, in the time of a descendant of his, who had arrived at the rank of a great prince, another famine afflicted the land, and he, like his ancestor, sought for relief from the abundance of a more fortunate country. We find it recorded that, 'when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt he said unto his sons: Why do you look one upon another? Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt; get you gone down thither, and buy for us from them, that we may live and not die.' Upon this passage, full as it is of instruction to us, who live three thousand five hundred years after the event, and yet have framed laws to prevent the abundance of one country from relieving the distresses of another, the enlightened commentator—enlightened by the very spirit of the old record—says:—

"Thus Providence orders it that one place should be a succour and supply to another, for *we are all brethren*. The Egyptians, the seed of accursed Ham, have plenty, when God's blessed Israel want. Thus God, in dispensing common favours, often crosses hands. Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt; he saw the corn that his neighbours had bought there and brought home. It is a spur to exertion to see where supplies are to be had, and to see others supplied. He reproved his sons for delaying to provide corn for their families. He said, 'Why do you look one upon another?' Note, when we are in trouble and want, it is folly for us to stand looking one upon another; that is, to stand desponding and despairing as if there was no hope, no help; to stand disputing, either which shall have the honour of going first, or the safety of coming last; to stand deliberating and debating what we shall do, *and doing nothing*. Let it never be said, 'we left that to be done to-morrow which we could as well have done to-day.' Jacob quickened them to go to Egypt. '*Get you down thither.*' *Masters of families must*

*not only pray for daily bread for their families, and food convenient, but must lay themselves out with care and industry to provide it.*

“Again, ‘the famine was sore in the land,’ and again the patriarch sent his sons to bring home food; but doubting whether money alone could purchase what was so much needed, he said to them: ‘Take of the best fruits of the land in your vessels, a little balm, and a little honey, spices and myrrh, nuts and almonds.’ And again does the Christian commentator, out of that right religious sentiment which so often leads to right judgment on the most complex questions, utter sound principles of political economy: ‘He sent a present of such things as the land afforded, *balm and honey, spices and myrrh, nuts and almonds*, the commodities that Canaan exported. Providence dispenses its gifts variously. Some countries produce one commodity, others another, *that commerce may be preserved*. Honey and spices will never make up for the want of bread corn. The famine was sore in Canaan, and yet they had balm and myrrh. We may live well enough on plain food without dainties, but we cannot live upon dainties without plain food. Let us thank God that that which is most needful and useful is generally most cheap and common.’ Yes, *generally*, for in the goodness of God there is abundance of corn and provisions upon the earth for the use of all his creatures, *if they were freely exchanged*; but our laws permit the importation of ‘dainties’—the spices, the balm, the myrrh, the nuts and the almonds—for the use of the law makers, while, for their sole benefit, ‘plain food,’ the food of the multitude is rigorously excluded till there is a famine as sore in the land as that which afflicted Canaan.

“Seven hundred years after Jacob had sent the produce of Canaan for the produce of Egypt, we find that a bargain was made between Solomon, who was building ‘a house unto the Lord,’ and Hiram, King of Tyre, who contracted to supply him by sea, on floats, with cedar wood and well-instructed workmen; Hiram, like a paternal ruler, requiring food for his household in exchange. Solomon fulfilled his bargain by giving 20,000 measures of wheat and twenty measures of pure oil. On this transaction Mathew Henry remarks: ‘If Tyre supplies Israel with craftsmen, Israel will supply Tyre with corn. Thus, by the wise disposal of Providence, *one country has need of another, and is benefited by another, that there may be mutual dependence, to the glory of God our common Parent.*’ ”

## CHAPTER XIV.

### CHANGE OF ADMINISTRATION.

On Thursday, April 15th, a meeting was held in Manchester of delegates from the principal towns of the kingdom, for the purpose of considering the course of proceeding to be recommended to the meeting to be held in London, on the occasion of Mr. Villiers's motion being brought before the House of Commons. The resolutions passed were brought forward for confirmation at a public meeting, held in the evening in the Corn Exchange, attended by nearly two thousand members of the association. The chair was occupied by Mr. J. B. Smith, and on his right sat C. P. Villiers, M.P., H. Ashworth, E. Ashworth, G. W. Wood, M.P., Sir Thomas Potter, T. Milner Gibson, Richard Cobden, C. J. S. Walker, E. Armitage, Robert Gardner, Holland Hoole, W. Rawson, Thomas Harbottle, Joseph Brotherton, M.P., and R. H. Greg, M.P. Among the deputies were Sir Joshua Walmesley, H. P. Atkinson, and W. Duffy, from Liverpool; J. Higginbottom, Ashton; Peter Rylands, Warrington; John Bright, Rochdale; G. Barlow, N. Mellor, and T. Hall, Oldham; A. W. Paulton, Bolton; T. Cheetham, W. H. Sefton, Mr. Dudley, and Alderman Hollins, Stockport; M. Clayton and R. Milligan, Bradford; and James Wilson, London.

Mr. James Wilson (afterwards of the *Economist*) moved: "That this meeting recommends to the Council of the

National Anti-Corn-Law League, to invite, by circular, deputies from all the anti-corn-law associations in the kingdom to assemble in London, at the time when Mr. Villiers shall bring forward his annual motion on the subject of the Corn Laws." Mr. J. C. Dyer seconded the motion, and it was carried. Mr. John Bright, on his way towards that higher "level" which he and Mr. Cobden were soon to find, moved a resolution that members of Parliament should be waited upon, and invited to support Mr. Villiers on that occasion. He spoke effectively, but very briefly, on the misery occasioned by the Corn Laws. Mr. Cobden said only a few words at the close of the meeting. Gibson, their future able coadjutor, spoke, as representative of the London association, at some length, and with much point of argument and wit. The principal speech was Mr. Villiers's, who expressed his belief in success in Parliament, with a manly, spirited, and intelligent co-operation from without. He happily ridiculed some of the fallacies enunciated by the landowners, and, in reference to one of them, stated that Sir William Molesworth intended to move for a committee to ascertain what were the real relations between the price of food and the rate of wages. The Corn Laws, he said, were the great and flagrant deviation from the principle of legislating for the general good and not for particular interests. He said that he could not but hope, that many would now give their aid to the movement who had not yet taken any prominent part in it, and alluded particularly to ministers of religion; for he could not conceive anything more immediately within the province of the disciples of Him, who said "feed my people," and that "the labourer is worthy of his hire," than to inculcate the charity of feeding the poor, by enabling them by honest industry to feed themselves. The Rev. S. Beardsall, seconded by the Rev. W. Mountford, moved the following resolution in accordance with Mr. Villiers's remarks: "That the constantly in-

creasing physical sufferings of the labouring population, arising from the want of employment and the scarcity of food, are *inimical to the progress of religion and morality*; and this meeting earnestly appeals to ministers of the gospel, and to philanthropists and Christians of every denomination, to lend their aid in the effort to abolish the unjust tax upon the importation of the first necessities of life—a tax which impiously thwarts the bounteous designs of Providence, who has prepared abundantly upon the face of the earth for the wants of all his creatures.”

Carrying out the movement upon electoral boroughs, Mr. Cobden, Mr. George Wilson, and myself, were deputed to visit Wigan, where we were introduced to a numerous meeting of the electors, in the Commercial Hall, by Mr. J. S. Heron, one of the borough magistrates. Mr. Wilson gave a clear and distinct view of the mischievous operation of the Corn Law. I exposed the falsehood of the assertion that it had operated to the benefit of farmers or farm-labourers, and exhorted the electors that if any candidate offered himself who would not vote for its total and unconditional repeal, to tell him to go home and study political economy. Mr. Cobden argued for total repeal, and his familiar illustrations, home truths, and luminous expositions, brought rounds of applause at the conclusion of almost every sentence. He was followed by the Rev. Mr. Roaf, in an eloquent and argumentative speech, and a resolution was passed, that the electors present pledged themselves that they would support no candidate who would not vote for the total abolition of the Corn Laws.

Various indications had been given during the session of Parliament that ministers were unsafe in their position, and rumours began to arise of a dissolution being at hand; and as it could not be believed that they would resort to that step without passing some measure that would secure them popular support, much speculation took place as to what would be the election “cry.” It was anticipated that,



as the anti-corn-law agitation was daily becoming more active and more formidable, the attempt would be made to obtain the support of the League to the tottering administration. Notwithstanding this expectation, the House of Commons seemed to be taken with surprise when, on the night of Friday, April 30th, Lord John Russell gave notice that on the 30th of May he should move, "That the house resolve itself into a committee of the whole house, to consider of the acts relating to the trade in corn." This announcement was received with vehement cheering from the opposition members, who regarded it as a confession that ministers felt the necessity of a new cry, followed by counter-cheering from the ministerial benches, the occupants desiring to have it understood that the movement would be a successful one. The subsequent excitement and confusion, indicated that neither party was so confident as the noisy demonstrations would seem to evince. The opposition obviously were afraid that good whig "political capital" would be made out of the step in advance, and the ministerialists, as obviously, were afraid that it came too late to secure the assistance of those who demanded total, immediate, and unconditional repeal. Perhaps the fear was greatest on the side of the opposition. They were enraged that the Melbourne ministry had taken a course by which they could recover a portion of their lost popularity. They had seen ministers damaging their reputation by half measures, brought forward only to be abandoned; they had seen, with exultation, the people holding aloof from men who had ceased to be regarded with confidence; they had calculated on a continuance of the same timid, and consequently estranging policy; they had calculated on a few more instances of abandonment of the only principles which could give them a hold on public confidence; and they had thought that the pear was fast ripening, and that the time was rapidly approaching, when they should only have to extend the hand, and

appropriate it to themselves. But ministers disappointed them. They had a *good* card left in the pack, and they played it; the mistake was, that they did not play the *best*. On the 7th of May, Lord John Russell declared his intention of proposing a fixed duty of 8s. per quarter on wheat, of 5s. on rye, of 4s. 6d. on barley, and of 3s. 4d. on oats.

The course followed by the Anti-Corn-Law League, on the intelligence that a change in the law was to be made a cabinet measure, was in accordance with all the previous measures of the body. It existed as the pledged opponent of any impost whatever on the people's bread. The council met at Manchester on Saturday, May 1st, and addressed letters to all the associations, urging them to redoubled exertions for the *total repeal* of the Corn Laws. A special and more numerous meeting, attended by a number of influential members from the surrounding towns, was held on the following Tuesday, when it was moved by Mr. John Bright, seconded by Mr. Alderman Kershaw: "That, under the more encouraging circumstances in which the question of the bread tax is now placed, it is highly expedient that redoubled efforts be made to obtain a full expression of public opinion, in condemnation of that unjust and inhuman enactment;" and "That, in order to carry into effect the foregoing resolution, a deputation shall be sent to Birmingham, Hull, Bristol, and Newcastle, and such other towns as the council think proper, in order to rouse the inhabitants to the absolute necessity of making increased exertions to forward petitions to the House of Commons at this important crisis of the great question of the repeal of the bread tax."

An address from the council of the League, signed by Mr. George Wilson, its chairman, was issued and widely distributed, urging the free traders throughout the kingdom to be up and doing, and recommending the demand

for total repeal as the true policy of even those who might be more anxious to support ministers than to have completely free importation at once :—

“ Ministers have announced their intention to seek to re-adjust the balance between a decreasing revenue and an increasing expenditure, by approximating our tariff, as far as they can, to one constructed on the principle of taxing from revenue alone, not for protection. They have at the same time announced their intention of grappling with the inevitable question of the bread tax. But they have kept the two questions separate. With the tariff they got to work at once. But with regard to the bread tax, they announce that a month hence they will invite the legislature to deliberate on what is to be done. They say to the country, as plain as words can speak, ‘ Tell us what you want, and what amount of support we can look for.’

“ The true view to take of the ministerial step of Friday evening is, that they are feeling their way, to learn what they can, and what they ought to do. Therefore, do we say, that they are the true friends of their country, who, between this time and the first of June, will exert themselves most strenuously to show ministers and the House of Commons what is the real wish of the people on the great question of the bread tax. Honesty now, and always is, the best policy. There must be no reserve; every man must tell frankly what he wants—the whole of what he wants. The man who, thinking, or professing to think, that the law which imposed the bread tax ought at once to be swept from the statute book, is as false to the government as to the cause, if he persuades those who wish for total and immediate repeal to ask for less. He bids them deceive government; he bids them tell government that fewer are prepared to back them in a total repeal than really are; he bids them tell government that a measure will give satisfaction which he knows will not. Asking for all we want, cannot weaken our cause in Parliament.”

On Thursday evening, May 6th, an important meeting was held in the Music Hall, Liverpool, convened by placard on one day's notice by the Anti-Corn-Law Association of that great commercial town, and a deputation from the Council of the League were present, consisting of Messrs. Thomas Bazley, John Brooks, Richard Cobden, and John Bright. The immense room was filled to overflowing, and hundreds of persons were unable to gain admittance. Sir Joshua Walmsley was called to the chair. Mr. Bazley,

who stated the objects of the League in visiting Liverpool, said they had no wish to dictate to the people of Liverpool, but seeing that it was a common interest, they came to plead for the assistance of the important community of that borough. Mr. Bright next addressed the meeting, and spoke with great earnestness on the subject, which he conscientiously believed to be the most important which could then occupy their attention. He showed that the Corn Law was passed to make corn and food dear, by making it scarce, and appealed to the common sense and the moral and religious feeling of the audience, if a law having this object could really be productive of good to this or any other community. It was a quarrel, not between manufacturers and farmers, but between the bread-eating millions and the few who wish to monopolize the soil, and every honest man should give a helping hand in the great and good cause. Mr. J. Brooks was next called upon, and, in a speech remarkable for its happy illustration, he showed how the commerce of Great Britain was suffering from the fetters monopoly fastened upon it. Mr. Cobden next came forward, and beginning at the beginning, he pointed out how the bread tax had originated, how it had worked, the ruin which it had produced, and the prospect which its continuance opened to the country. He most happily illustrated the miserable policy of the Corn Law, its injustice to the industrious classes, and its evident tendency to reduce the prosperity of the country. He pointed out how farmers, agricultural labourers, manufacturers, and artisans, were alike despoiled of the fruits of their honest labour, for the purpose of affording protection to the least numerous class. A Mr. Dix wished to reply to what he deemed the fallacies of the League, and for half-an-hour he spoke the usual string of absurdities which persons wholly ignorant of the subject, or interested in the monopoly, are accustomed to bring forward. Mr. Cobden replied, and calling Mr. Dix to the front of the



platform, asked him a simple question : “ Do you say that the bread tax is a *just* tax ? ” Mr. Dix attempted to evade the question ; but Mr. Cobden repeated it, with the addition of—“ Answer the question ; yes or no ? ” “ Do you say the bread tax is a just tax ? ” Mr. Dix replied, “ *I do !* ” It is impossible to describe the exclamation of abhorrence with which this declaration was received. The hisses, groans, and signs of disapprobation were absolutely deafening. Mr. Cobden then, in a most felicitous manner, cut the ground from under the friend of the bread tax, and for nearly an hour argued, in a most lucid and powerful manner, against the horrible injustice of the bread tax. William Rathbone, Esq., moved the following resolution, and Lawrence Heyworth, Esq., seconded it :—“ That this meeting, deeply sensible of the gross injustice as well as impolicy of the existing Corn Laws, pledge themselves to persevere in their exertions to their total repeal.” C. Holland, Esq., moved a vote of thanks to the deputation of the League, and declared that the inhabitants of Liverpool were greatly indebted to them for their visit, and for their eloquent and unanswerable speeches. Mr. Alderman Shiel seconded the resolution ; and both resolutions were carried by acclamation. A more enthusiastic meeting was never held in Liverpool, and calculated to tell powerfully on the Parliament and the country. Only one day’s notice was given, and yet the immense room was crammed to the ceiling, whilst hundreds could not gain admittance, and the speeches of the gentlemen composing the deputation were received with continued cheering ; proving the deep interest felt in that great port in the great question of repealing the bread tax.

To give even the briefest report of the meetings which were held in various parts of the kingdom at this period would fill a volume. I find in my paper of May 15th, the following illustration of the manner in which men were bracing themselves up for the coming contest :—“ Two



members of the League were deputed last Thursday to visit Ashton-under-Lyne, Stalybridge, Dukinfield, Godley, and Hyde, to obtain subscriptions towards its object—the total repeal of the Corn Law. They had not one refusal from whig or tory, men of all political parties expressing their warmest wishes for the utter destruction of the monopoly. In that one day, in that comparatively narrow district, the deputation received subscriptions to the amount of £1,650." The same district made much heavier contributions afterwards when much wider operations made them necessary; but a contribution of £1,650 in one day, when ministers were promising an eight shilling duty, in the belief that it would be satisfactory to the Leaguers, and when their supporters were everywhere earnestly recommending a prompt acceptance of the offered concession, and designating as "impracticables" all who did not thankfully declare for the compromise, pretty strongly proved that ministers had been too late with their onward movement.

The Whig Budget of 1841, though falling short of the requirements of justice in the matter of a great necessity of life, and of the immediate wants of a people reduced to great depth of distress, was a bold approach to the principles of a liberal commercial policy, the benefits of which had been elicited by the Import Duties Committee. The financial accounts for the year showed a heavy deficit which it was proposed to make good, not by the levying of new taxes, but, by lessening duties which burdened commerce, and diminished consumption. The duties on the importation of corn, in lieu of the sliding scale, would have made a considerable addition to the revenue. The protectionists set themselves determinedly against this modification of the old law, most unwisely, for duties productive to the exchequer would have been retentively held by every successive administration. On sugar, prohibition was to be exchanged for protection; the produce of Cuba and Brazil was to be admitted to such competition with the

sugar of our colonies as a differential duty to the extent of 50 per cent. would permit, and it was calculated that the gain to the revenue would be about £800,000. The protection of Canadian timber against Baltic was to be reduced from four hundred to a hundred and fifty per cent. "This budget," says the *British Quarterly Review* (No. II.), "was a measure presenting, indeed, many glaring faults and deficiencies, falling far short of the mark of justice and sound policy, but, with all its faults, it deserved to be characterised as the boldest, wisest, and best principled commercial and fiscal reform ever proposed by a British ministry. It had the transcendant merit of seeking to increase revenue by lessening taxation, to enrich the treasury by adding to the comforts of the people. Curious was the combination and interchange of sympathies on the part of the frightened and irritated monopolists. Canadian timber-merchants were scandalized at the possibility of Jamaica coffee being sweetened with Cuba sugar. Landlords were beside themselves with indignation at the meditated attack on lumberers, and West Indians were wild in the cause of dear wheat and crazy old ships."

A debate of eight nights was terminated on the 18th May. Lord Sandon had moved a resolution against the ministerial proposal to admit slave-grown sugar, and it was carried by a majority of 36, the numbers being 317 for, and 281 against it. The discussion embraced the whole question of free trade. Throughout the whole of it, and in the division with which it terminated, the conservatives and protectionists showed the folly that had repeatedly excluded them from office, when whig blundering seemed to open the door for their admission. They spoke and they voted against all amendment of our prohibitive and deeply injurious commercial policy, and Sir Robert Peel, so far from standing forth as a statesman fitted to lead and direct his party, exhibited himself as one humble enough to obey their behests. His declaration in favour of a sliding

scale with all its uncertainty and attendant speculation and derangement of the currency, gave strong proof that he was opposed to ministers in the narrow spirit of partizanship, or that, if he had the ambition to rule on broader principles, he was willing, in the meantime, to follow in the wake of men infinitely below him in understanding. Lord John Russell, who has often great tact in availing himself of the blunders of his opponents, exhibited himself in favourable contrast to his able rival, and while advocating only a compromise between conflicting interests, gave utterance to doctrines in which the principles of entirely free trade were involved. The conclusion of his speech was what might have been expected had he, instead of only lessening the grievous burthen of an impoverishing tax, been proposing its immediate abolition—and for ever!

“The right honourable baronet had not held out the probability of any amelioration of sugar duties, neither had he shown how regularity in the corn trade was consistent with the sliding scale, and he might depend upon it that any great alteration in that scale would be resisted with equal vehemence. However, he would not now enter into any further discussion of the Corn Laws, because he would have a future opportunity of doing so (cheers)—he only wished to make one observation upon what had fallen from the noble member for North Lancashire in reference to the trade in grain. That noble lord had said that the producer of corn could not depend upon his own skill and industry, but must rely upon the sunshine and the storm, for the abundance and scarcity of his crop. That was true as to the producers of a particular country. He must depend upon a higher power; but the same power that directs the storm had given a remedy for any local disadvantage; for such was the bounty and benevolence of Providence that if in one country there was a bad season and deficient crop, another was blessed with good seasons and an abundant harvest. (Hear, hear.) It was fortunately in the power of man, by his skill and ingenuity, and the means they gave of traversing the ocean, to take advantage of the beneficence of the Creator. (Cheers.) If that intercourse were not permitted by short-sightedness and error, do not let it be said that it was to the infliction of heaven that a deficiency of food was to be attributed.—(Hear, hear.) Let the blame be laid where it was due; let the laws be blamed which defeated the beneficent scheme by which plenty would be

given to all the nations of the world, more or less depending on each other, and keeping up the kindly and beneficial intercourse. (Hear, hear.) Let the laws be blamed which blasted the fair prospects of the nation and inflicted the curse of sterility, barrenness, and scarcity upon a land where plenty might reign, and mar the gracious designs of Providence by unjust legislation. (Continued cheering.)

His lordship's peroration was about as good as one of the small tracts of the League—almost as good as Mathew Henry's commentary upon the text, "There is corn in Egypt." He here gave an indication that defeat that night was not to prevent his bringing on the motion with regard to the Corn Law of which he had given notice. All doubt upon that point was removed on the following Thursday night. The house was in a state of great excitement, the tories being driven almost to madness because the whigs did not consider the union of monopolists a sufficient reason for leaving office before they had brought their plans fully before the house. Lord Darlington, to be relieved from painful suspense, put the question to Lord John Russell when he meant to bring forward his motion, to which his lordship quietly replied, "On Friday, the fourth of June." It was understood that, besides having a discussion on the Corn Law then, ministers would bring forward the whole tariff, and that, if defeated, they would dissolve Parliament, and "appeal to the country"—the appeal, however, being only to an electoral body in which his lordship, unfortunately for his now position, by his own avowal, had sought to give the preponderating influence to the landed interest.

During the protracted debate in the House of Commons, the ministerial defeat being anticipated, and when the defeat had been incurred, numerous meetings were held all over the country, and, generally, the principle recognised was the entire repeal of import duties on corn and provisions, with a reference to the ministerial measure as an instalment to be accepted without any compromise of the demand for full measures of justice. The town



council met at Manchester, on the 17th, at which Mr. Cobden said he was glad to see fresh concessions to the cause of free trade, though they did not go so far as he did, and they might be regarded as pioneers to clear the road from many obstructions, and leave it more open for those who went the length of total repeal. On Tuesday, an excessively crowded meeting was held in the Town Hall, convened on the requisition of 1,360 firms and individuals, and presided over by the mayor. At a tea party in the evening, held in the Corn Exchange, which was attended by nearly eight hundred persons, amongst them many ladies, sixty of whom presided at the tea tables, there was much sound exposition of principle, and most painful details of the wretched condition of the people. The principal speakers were, Mr. J. B. Smith, Mr. L. Heyworth, of Liverpool, the Rev. Mr. McKerrow, the Rev. Daniel Hearne, Mr. Alderman Brooks, the Rev. J. W. Massie, who had done good service to the cause of free trade in Perth, and had recently been appointed minister of an independent chapel in Salford, Mr. T. M. Gibson, soon to be one of the members for Manchester, Mr. Geo. Thompson, who spoke as eloquently in attacking the landowners' monopoly as he had, in former years, when denouncing slavery, and about last, by none considered as any thing near the least, Mr. Cobden, who, in the course of one of those plain but telling speeches, for which people now called, whether he intended to address them or not, said: "Beginning myself without one shilling besides what I derived from my own industry, I have pushed my way along; but I declare it, as my firm conviction, that had I been left to commence my career at the present day, such is the state of trade, I could not have a chance of rising. Let the young men who fill our warehouses think of this, and they will see the deep interest they have in this matter." He concluded by appealing, amidst great cheering, to Mr. Thompson, to give such a portion of his time



as he could spare from the emancipation of a hundred millions of his fellow men in India, to the emancipation of his fellow countrymen from the effects of a depressing monopoly at home.

The Chamber of Commerce followed, and, at a meeting held on Thursday, the 20th of May, resolved: "That this meeting has learned with deep regret the decision of the House of Commons on Lord Sandon's motion—a decision which, in the opinion of this chamber, places in extreme jeopardy the largest foreign market for our cotton goods, the loss of which, at a period when our capitalists and operatives are suffering under an unparalleled depression of trade, would be fraught with the most ruinous consequences to the surrounding community."

The working classes of Manchester were eager to join in this movement. A great number of active-minded men amongst them believing, in spite of the often and loudly reiterated assertions of the bread-taxers' hirelings to the contrary, that the great majority of their own order were fully convinced that the operation of the Corn Law was to lower their wages while it raised the price of their food, originated a requisition to the mayor to call an open-air meeting, where an opportunity might be given them to testify their abhorrence of the starvation-creating monopoly. In three days it received *five thousand three hundred and ninety signatures*, a fact of itself sufficiently demonstrative that they were very far from being indifferent to the question. The mayor returned a respectful answer, approving of the object of the meeting, but officially declining to call it, on the ground that he had already called and presided over one in the Town Hall for the same purpose. A meeting of the requisitionists was called, and upwards of two thousand of their number met, and resolved that a meeting should be held in Stephenson Square, that Mr. Cobden should be requested to preside, and that the various trades and temperance societies

should be invited to form a grand procession previous to the meeting.

The demonstration was announced to take place on Wednesday, the 2nd of June. Two years before, a meeting, held in the Corn Exchange to receive the report of the anti-corn-law delegates to London, had been invaded by a rude and violent rabble; many meetings had been disturbed in a similar manner, no matter what their object was, by men professing chartism; and O'Connor, in his *Northern Star*, had issued his mandate to convert all meetings into demonstrations for the charter. The requisition for the Manchester meeting of the working classes—a meeting which would show that they did not sympathise with the physical-force chartists—was considered to be dangerous to the power assumed by those enemies to free discussion. So soon as the announcement appeared, the disturbers were at work. Bills in great profusion were posted on the walls, not only of Manchester, but of Bolton and other large towns, calling on the chartists to congregate in their “countless thousands,” and put down the “humbug clap-trap of the League;” a formidable list was given of chartist leaders, who were to come from Huddersfield and other places to take part in the proceedings; Mr C. Wilkins, the barrister, was reported to have presented a cheque at Messrs. Jones, Loyd, and Co.’s, drawn by the Duke of Buckingham for £150, and it was believed that this sum was to help the war of opposition; and hustings were put up *during the night* of Tuesday, closely adjoining those which had been erected by the requisitionists, in order that the hirelings, by having a place of their own to speak from, might throw the meeting into confusion; and, by the mouth of their own chairman, announce a glorious victory over the “base whigs,” who asked for the liberty of exchanging the products of their labour for food. The thinking working men of Manchester were roused by these preparations for disturbance. They thought this was a

tyranny even worse than that which was attempted in vain by the "six acts" of Castlereagh, which had been passed expressly to prevent free discussion; and it was easy to see that sooner than permit this newly-assumed power of obstruction, force would be met by force, and the yellers and howlers subjected to a process of summary ejection.

From twenty different parts of the town there marched a band of at least a thousand men, each preceded by banners, bearing appropriate inscriptions. The congregated twenty thousand nearly filled the square. The chartists had previously surrounded the platform with their flags, which prevented a view being obtained of the speakers. One of a large size, inscribed "Down with the Whigs," especially obstructed the sight, and the chartists refusing to remove it to the outside, where the free-trade flags were ranged, an attempt was made to pull it down, or remove it. Sticks had been provided to aid in its defence, and were lustily laid on the heads of those who made the attempt, and the latter being unarmed, it seemed at first as if the bludgeons of the hundreds would prevail over the will of the thousands, but in the short conflict of a minute, the offending flags were seized and torn into ribbons, and the flag staffs, broken into short lengths, became formidable weapons, and in another minute the physical force men fled from the power which they had foolishly roused, each to consider, at the outside of the meeting, on the truth of the saying, that he had tried a game which others could play at. The platform was principally occupied by plain working men, representative of the requisitionists, and by gentlemen invited from the League and from the Young Men's Association, among whom were Sir Thomas Potter, and Messrs. Richard Cobden, Wm. Rawson, John Brooks, C. J. S. Walker, and Edward Watkin. With them stood Dr. Sleight and Mr. Charles Wilkins, the barrister, sent by the Central Society for the Protection of Agriculture. Mr. Cobden being called to the chair, begged a fair hearing

to all the speakers. Mr. E. Watkin moved a resolution, "That, in the opinion of this meeting, the bread tax is impolitic, injurious, and unjust." It was seconded by Mr. E. Daly.

"The Chairman then asked if any body wished to propose an amendment.

"Dr. Sleigh: Yes; I do.

"A person named Bairstow, a chartist, also expressed a similar intent.

"The Chairman: I am applied to by two parties to move amendments; neither of these gentlemen are inhabitants of Manchester, but I have no objection that they should be heard, if it be your pleasure. (Cheers, and loud cries of 'No, no.')

One of them is Mr. Bairstow; the other is Dr. Sleigh. I will first submit to your decision whether you will hear Mr. Bairstow, the delegate from Yorkshire.

"The meeting instantly, amidst loud cries of 'who sent him here,' decided that he should not be heard.

"The Chairman, addressing Dr. Sleigh: Shall I now put it to the meeting whether it will hear you?

"Dr. Sleigh: No; I wish you to call upon them to hear me, as I have been invited.

"A chartist named Connor here said that he was an inhabitant of Manchester and wished to propose an amendment, but he was saluted by a volley of groans and hisses which were continued for several minutes when he retired."

It had been a resolution amongst the O'Connor chartists, acted upon on numerous occasions, that the advocates of free trade should not be permitted a hearing. The natural consequence of this tyranny was, that they were refused a hearing in their turn; and the determination amongst the working men in Manchester, nearly all radical themselves, was the stronger from the belief, that these men were not present from any love to the charter, but as the hirelings of the protectionists. On the intercession of the Rev. Mr. Hearne, Dr. Sleigh was heard, and patiently, until he declared his opinion that the Corn Law was not the cause of distress, when such a storm of disapprobation arose as to furnish him an excuse for retiring. He handed, however, an amendment to the chairman, to the effect that it would be unfair in the meeting to pass



resolutions condemnatory of the Corn Laws without giving him a hearing. Mr. Charles Wilkins claimed to be heard as seconder, but as it was known that he had gone, supposed to be paid by the protectionists, to oppose the election of a free trader for Walsall, and as it was believed that the Duke of Buckingham had paid him £150 to play the game of obstruction in Manchester, the meeting instantly decided that he should not be heard. Several working men then addressed the meeting, and a petition, praying for the total and immediate abolition of the Corn Law, was carried all but unanimously.

A procession was now formed, at the front of which were Sir Thomas Potter, Messrs. C. J. S. Walker, George Wilson, H. Rawson, Samuel Lees, James Howie, and a number of other gentlemen, on horseback. Near the front, but on foot, were Messrs. Richard Cobden, William Rawson, James Kershaw, W. Evans, and other well-known friends of the anti-corn-law cause. The long line of flags and banners, principally with devices and inscriptions on a pure white ground, produced a most imposing effect as they waved in the rays of a brilliant sun. "The total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws," was the predominant inscription, almost every separate district having selected it as the leading motto. Among others were seen "Down with the infamous bread tax," "No fixed duty," "No sliding scale," "God is with us," "Equal rights," "No monopoly," "Villiers, the friend of the people." There were also a number of loaves carried on poles, exhibiting the relative proportions of the English, Polish, and the American loaf. Market-street presented one dense mass of spectators, loudly cheering as the procession passed, and the windows were crowded with ladies. On passing the rooms of the League, in Newall's Buildings, from the windows of which large banners were waving, each district division gave three hearty cheers. The various bodies congregated in St. Ann's Square,



where, after a few words from Sir Thomas Potter, the great multitude quietly dispersed.

Mr. Charles Wilkins did not again subject himself to the probability of being again refused a hearing. Dr. Sleigh had more of courage or of pertinacity, or of fidelity to his employers. On Wednesday, the 9th of June, he gave a lecture, in the Corn Exchange, to an audience admitted by ticket, which bound them to be obedient to the chairman, and not to interrupt the speaker. His main arguments were, that we had always had Corn Laws; that the products of agriculture greatly exceeded the products of manufactures; that agriculture employed more hands than manufactures; that the manufactures of New England, although there was abundance of corn there, were not thriving; that foreigners were not disposed to take our goods; that, if the Corn Laws were repealed, all protection to manufactures would have to be abolished, and if they were, our manufacturers could not stand the competition six months; that a low price of corn would cause low wages; with a long string of other fifty-times-refuted fallacies. The audience felt insulted by the nonsense addressed to them; but their principal manifestation of disapproval was loud and contemptuous laughter. This was met by lusty shouts from a band of hot-headed Tories and another of physical-force chartists; and at last the lecturer, out of breath, out of temper, and long out of argument, was obliged to desist; first, however, throwing out a challenge to the anti-corn-law party, to appoint a representative to discuss the question with him in public.

The glove thrown down was picked up by Mr. Finnigan, a hand-loom weaver, on behalf of the Operative Anti-Corn-Law Association. Dr. Sleigh would rather have had the credit of contending with one of the League leaders, but he could not well refuse to meet any one who chose to accept the public challenge. On Monday, the 14th of June, the affair "came off" in the Corn Exchange. *The*

*Anti-Bread-Tax Circular* gives the following account of the combat :—

“Two thousand five hundred tickets were issued; 1,250 for each side.” Mr. Finnigan opened the proceedings, and throughout his address was enthusiastically cheered. Dr. Sleigh followed, and for some time was attentively heard by the vast assemblage. When he came to the main question, however, his fallacies were so glaring that he was frequently interrupted by loud bursts of laughter, groans, and hisses. At the end of every sentence he appealed to his audience as to the incontrovertible truth of his remarks, and was invariably met by deafening shouts of ‘no, no.’ One point was that the *end* justified the *means*. For instance the Word of God said, ‘Thou shalt do no murder;’ that is, said he, ‘thou shalt not take away life; but there are circumstances in which the taking away of human life is justifiable.’ This was too much for the audience, and the groans with which it was received were awful, and it was some minutes before silence could be restored. Meantime the Doctor waxed warm, and used some irritating and insulting language to his hearers, which increased the uproar. Another of his points was that the repeal of the Corn Law would reduce wages. ‘This,’ said he, ‘was admitted by all, even the most talented repealers in the kingdom.’ (Shouts of ‘no, no,’ and great uproar.) ‘This, I say, is admitted by all the repealers in the kingdom. Now, they tell you that corn will be 10s. a quarter cheaper. Well, ten shillings a quarter is a farthing a pound. The average consumption is a pound a day; therefore you would save in the price of your bread seven farthings a week. (Loud laughter.) But I will prove to you that while you would gain this in the price of your bread, you would lose, in the reduction of wages, as much as would take from you 225 nine pound loaves in the year. (Immense laughter, and great uproar.) You dare not hear me; you allow your masters to cram this down your throats, as they have done the New Poor Law.’ (Renewed uproar.) At this moment a friend of the Doctor’s came on the platform, and said ‘you had better come away.’ ‘Yes,’ replied the Doctor; ‘there certainly will be a disturbance;’ and, turning to the audience, he said, ‘I shall call upon Sir Charles Shaw (superintendent of police) to dissolve the meeting.’ (Renewed uproar.) ‘Well, seeing that you are wilfully blinded; seeing that you wilfully allow your masters to throw dust in your eyes, I abandon this discussion.’ Frightful yells and groans, in which many of the Doctor’s friends joined, followed this announcement. Mr. Finnigan then mounted the table, and was received with deafening shouts of applause. He ably exposed the nonsense of Dr. Sleigh, and was followed by Mr. Greig, of Leeds, after which it was resolved, without a single dissident: ‘That

this meeting deeply regrets that Dr. Sleigh has availed himself of the expression of feeling caused by his imprudent and peradventure intentionally extravagant statements, to fly from a discussion, which so far as it has proceeded, has further convinced them of the injustice of the Corn Laws; and which, had it been concluded, would have acted as a reincitement to agitate for their total, immediate, and unconditional repeal.' ”

On Monday, June 21st, the farmers in Craven, who came to attend the fortnightly Skipton sheep and cattle market, found the walls placarded with a notice, that “A Farmer’s Son” would address them on the manner in which their interests were affected by the Corn Laws. Great interest was excited to ascertain who the farmer’s son was, and whether he was for or against the land owners’ monopoly. After the Market Place was nearly cleared, Mr. William Metcalf (now of Manchester), Mr. J. Dewhurst, Mr. Heelis (steward to the Earl of Thanet), and other gentlemen of Skipton, appeared on a balcony, in front of the Town Hall, and Mr. Metcalf introduced to a meeting of 1,000 or 1,200 persons, his friend, Mr. Prentice, of Manchester, whose father and ancestors had been farmers on one estate for three hundred years, and requested for him an attentive hearing, on a subject which deeply affected the interests of all engaged in agriculture. Thus introduced, I was about to address the meeting, but had to pause while a drove of cattle passed *to the south*. I took advantage of this incident, by asking where all the cattle and sheep were going to; and a person in the crowd having called out that some were on their way to Manchester, and some to the manufacturing towns in the West Riding, I began by showing how closely the interests of producers and consumers were connected. I said that in coming from Manchester, a distance of forty-two miles, I had scarcely seen half a dozen of corn fields. There was scarcely, in all that distance, enough of corn to feed their poultry. Up to Colne, the whole of the land was required to supply the population with milk and butter; and round

Skipton it was entirely devoted to the raising of sheep and cattle for the Manchester market. The Craven farmer was in fact a purchaser of corn as much as the manufacturers of Manchester, Burnley, and Blackburn were. Having thus obtained the ear of an audience, most of whom expected to hear the Corn Law defended, I went on to show that its repeal was not so much to make bread cheap, but that employment might be given, which would enable the now starving multitudes to purchase not only bread, but milk, butter, cheese, beef, and mutton, the produce upon which farmers had the best profit. I was listened to throughout with great attention, by an audience which seemed pleased to hear the question discussed without any mixture of political bitterness. When I had finished, a person from the crowd asked why the manufacturers asked for protection to themselves, when they refused it to the farmers? I replied that the farmer really had no protection, for if a permanent rise of prices could be effected it was followed by a rise of rents. The manufacturers required no protection, and the Anti-Corn-Law League and the Manchester Chamber of Commerce had declared that they wanted none, and that if they could have corn in exchange for their goods, the landlords and farmers might buy goods wherever they pleased. Another person asked if the landowners should not have protection to the amount of the taxes which fell on them exclusively? I denied that any fell on them exclusively, except the land tax, for which landowners had an ample equivalent in their exemption from taxes on the transmission of property, on auction duties, on farm horses, and on the insurance of agricultural produce. A third question was, "Did not the manufacturers wish to have cheap corn, in order to reduce wages?" To which I replied, that if they did, they took a strange way to effect their object, for the increased demand for labour, consequent on the opening of new markets, would necessarily raise wages.

## CHAPTER XV.

### CHANGE OF MINISTRY.

Having briefly sketched the proceedings of the League after the announcement of the fixed duty scheme proposed by the whig ministers, we now revert to their position in Parliament. Their defeat on the sugar duties had made it obvious that they must either resign, or appeal to the constituencies; and much discussion arose as to which course they would pursue. Their strong inclination to hold office, doubtless because they had a strong conviction that the government of the country would be better in their hands than in the hands of the tories, made men believe that they would not hastily relinquish their opportunities to effect public good. On the other hand it was much doubted whether they would gain anything by a general election, for their announced approach to a free-trade policy had roused all the energy of that class which, according to Lord John Russell's own declaration, ought to be predominant in Parliament; while that proposed approximation fell too far short of the free-trade requirement to gain friends amongst those who agitated for the total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws. From this dilemma they were delivered by Sir Robert Peel, whose political sagacity taught him to strike, before, in their progress towards liberal commercial policy, they acquired new and zealous supporters.



On Thursday, May 27th, Sir Robert moved: "That her Majesty's ministers do not sufficiently possess the confidence of the House of Commons to enable them to carry through the house measures which they deem of essential importance to the public welfare; and that their continuance in office under such circumstances is at variance with the spirit of the constitution." The animated debate was adjourned until next day, and then until Wednesday, and then until Thursday. On Friday (June 4th) the house divided, when the numbers were:—For the motion, 312; against it, 311, Majority, ONE. This was a small majority to drive the whigs from office, but it was sufficient, viewed in connection with former defeats, to convince them that they could do nothing if they remained; and on the following Monday, Lord J. Russell, on rising to declare what were the intentions of ministers, said it was apparent from the division that the business of the country could neither be carried on by the then government nor by the right honourable baronet. The only course, therefore, was to appeal to the country, and with a view of so doing, it was his intention to demand only such votes of the civil contingencies as were indispensable for the public service, until the meeting of the new Parliament. In reply to a question from Sir Robert Peel, his lordship added that no time should be lost in calling the new Parliament, and it was not the intention of himself or his colleagues to bring forward the question of the Corn Laws during that session. My comment at the time, on this position of affairs, was:

"The country knows how to estimate the movement. *There was no proposal of a want-of-confidence vote while the ministers did nothing.* It was only when they announced their intention to do something for the public benefit that Sir Robert Peel mustered his forces to drive them from office. The motion was in consequence of their defeat in the attempt to reduce the heavy duty on foreign grown sugar, and their announcement that they intended to reduce the duty on foreign grown corn. We will not say that all who voted with ministers were friends of free trade, but it is obvious that every person who voted in the majority

declared himself to be opposed to any reduction in the price of corn and sugar. Viewing the division in this light it affords some curious results. The votes of the English counties and universities were :—

For the monopolies of corn and sugar.....	117
For ministers.....	38

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Majority for the monopolies ..... 79

The landowners represented their own pockets on this occasion. Talk of an ‘appeal to the people’ in reference to county representation! The appeal will be one to the tenants at will, and they will do as their lords bid them. The Marquis of Chandos’ clause, unaccompanied by the ballot, in a country like England, where not one-tenth of the land is held on such leases as to make the tenants in any degree independent of the landlords, made a present of every county to the landowners, who, whether they be whig or tory, unite most cordially against every attempt to destroy, or even to alleviate, the mischievous effects of their monopoly. Ministers owe, therefore, the opposition of the counties to their own finality doctrines. Had they given protection to the voter they would have had great numbers of the tenantry on their side; but men will not run the risk of being turned out of their occupations, and of involving their families in immediate privations, perhaps in ruin, for a distant prospect of benefit to the community.”

On Tuesday, June 22nd, her Majesty prorogued the Parliament in person. The brief speech contained the following paragraph :—“The paramount importance of the trade and industry of the country, and my anxiety that the exigencies of the public services should be provided for in the manner least burdensome to the community, have induced me to resort to the means which the constitution has entrusted to me, of ascertaining the sense of my people upon matters which so deeply concern their welfare.” On the following day a royal proclamation declared the house dissolved.

The borough elections came first. The balance of representation in the Lancashire and Cheshire boroughs remained the same as in the previous Parliament, the gain to the progressives being one in Stockport, one in Bolton, and one in Preston; and the gain to the obstructives being two in Wigan, and one in Blackburn. The boroughs

in Yorkshire did much worse, the tories having gained in seven instances and lost only in one. Hull and Liverpool had "freemen" nursed in all the corruption of the old system; Knaresborough, returning as many members as Manchester, had a handful of voters easily corruptible; and Wigan had been rotten when a close borough, and the old leaven had leavened a great part of the new mass. Boroughs too small, boroughs cursed with "*freemen*," boroughs needing the protection of the ballot—these were the causes of defeat in those three counties, which ought to have given a preponderance of free-trade votes, equivalent to the loss which was anticipated in the agricultural district.

There were some elections which could not fail to afford high gratification to every true friend of his country, as giving proof that the good seed would, in due time, produce good fruit. Thus, at Walsall, where some doubt was entertained of returning an anti-corn-law candidate—where it was feared that neglected registration and the length of the Gladstone purse would, for one Parliament, give the representation to that family, Mr. Scott, a member of the League, was triumphantly returned. The abundant instruction which had been diffused amongst the electors during the canvass of Mr. J. B. Smith, had not been forgotten, and the spirit which had been engendered there by Mr. Cobden's addresses had not subsided. Mr. Scott, without treating a single voter, without expending a single farthing beyond the legal expenses, and with no other services from the League than the services of Mr. Joseph Hickin, its secretary, a native of Walsall, routed his antagonist under circumstances that promised to drive him from that borough for ever. Thus, at Bolton, John Bowring was returned, to give effect in Parliament to the political and commercial principles of Jeremy Bentham. As an honourable ambassador to other nations he could have effected treaties that would have elevated this country

to a high state of prosperity, but he had every where been met by the objections that England, by her exclusive commercial system, had set the example of prohibition, and that no bargain which he could effect, for a mutually beneficial change, would receive the sanction of a legislature in which he had not a seat, and in which there was but a very small band of men in favour of thoroughly free trade. And thus, at Stockport, Richard Cobden was returned, an especially gratifying event to me who had earnestly striven to have him selected as a candidate for Manchester. On his election I wrote: "Need we say that the result is matter for national exultation? Far greater than a local triumph—far greater than the gain of a single man—far greater than even the gain of a ministerial majority would have been, his return must be regarded. Cobden is the acknowledged leader of that great and energetic movement which has driven ministers to the recognition of free-trade principles, and which is now agitating the three kingdoms with a degree of excitation unparalleled. He goes to the House of Commons to give additional life and vigour to the movement there—to assert boldly the principle of total repeal amidst timid compromisers—to supply with practical information those who are right in theory—to keep up to the mark those who, without being very hearty in the cause, have used the cry of free-trade to secure their seats—to bring to the question of questions his ample knowledge of all the bearings of commerce, at home and abroad,—and to demolish with ready argument and pungent sarcasm the cunning sophistications by which monopoly is defended. Great honour to Stockport for the impulse it has given to the right cause."

Why was he not member for Manchester? It was a blunder that he was not—a blunder, although no evil consequences resulted from it—perhaps some good, for an able representative was secured, who had honourably thrown up the representation of Ipswich because he no



longer represented the conservative opinions which he had held when elected for that place, and who, subsequently, stood side by side with Cobden, in the house and out of the house, during the five years there were yet to elapse before the prospective repeal of the Corn Law was obtained. Some good, perhaps, came of the blunder, for the probability is that had Cobden represented Manchester he never would have been the representative of the West Riding of Yorkshire. Manchester, however, had the credit, such as it was, of inviting him, but in his reply to the invitation he had said that he would not consider himself as owing any allegiance to whig ministers, who, at that time, seemed likely enough to be driven from office. This reply was too hastily interpreted into a refusal to become a candidate. The truth is that the free traders did not then know their full strength in the borough, and they too readily yielded to the wish of many influential persons that a member should be chosen who, while he was a thorough opponent of monopoly, would not be indifferent to the retention of the whigs in office, and to the usurpation of place and power by another administration, believed to be adverse to every political and commercial reform. The disagreement amongst the liberals on this point caused no diminution in the zeal with which the operations of the League were carried on. Its members were all united for one grand purpose; and, during the whole of the long struggle, there never was any difference of opinion on other points permitted to weaken the efficiency of their agitation.

In Manchester, Mr. Thomas Milner Gibson was candidate for the seat which had been resigned by Mr. R. H. Greg, and he and Mr. Mark Philips were opposed by Sir George Murray and Mr. Entwistle, tories and protectionists. The contest was a very energetic one on both sides, but it was a fair one; for in so large a constituency bribery was hopeless. At the close of the poll the numbers were:



Philips, 3,695 ; Gibson, 3,575 ; Murray, 3,115 ; and Entwisle, 2,692.

The county elections decided the fate of ministers. Lord Howick lost his seat for Northumberland, and Lord Morpeth and Lord Milton theirs for the West Riding of Yorkshire ; and when the new house was analysed it was seen that, although there was a whig majority of nine in Scotland, and nineteen in Ireland, there was a conservative majority of 104 in England and Wales, leaving ministers in a minority of 76. The inquiry now became, not what they would do, but what the Tories, who were sure to succeed them in office, would do—what Sir Robert Peel, who would succeed Lord John Russell, would do. The question, it seems, was often put to himself. At a Tamworth dinner he said : “ I am constantly asked what it is I mean to propose, supposing I am called to the administration of affairs. *I will answer the question when I am placed in that position.* My advice for the present is, dismiss those who are at present in office. They have not the confidence—they had not the confidence of Parliament—they have not the confidence of the people. Change your physician ; the patient has not confidence in him. They found her in health and *they* left her in sickness ; and then they say to me what do you prescribe ? But I will wait till I am regularly called in.” The first great object then was to get rid of the old practitioner. It was thought that the new physician would be required by his own party to declare what his practice would be before they promised their support. The out-voted ministers assumed the air of men who held principles which, sooner or later, would prevail. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, at a dinner given to him at Winchester, said of the union of monopolists : “ He felt no despondency ; they might destroy a government, but they could not destroy truth and reason. *They* would triumph ; they were now silently winning their way, and whoever—he said it with perfect

confidence—whoever were placed at the helm of government, he felt perfectly satisfied that, before many years were over, they would reform their Corn Laws and revise their commercial system. Whether those who proposed such measures were those who now turned out the government because they proposed them, or whether it should be those ministers who now risked power and place in proposing them, was to him a matter of complete indifference, and he believed that was the case with his colleagues. They were attached to the principles and the measures they had proposed, and they would give their earnest support to those measures from whatever quarter they might come." It was amusing enough this tone of martyrdom to principles, which most men believed to have been assumed to make a good election "cry;" but it was obvious enough that the whig ministers were preparing themselves for a bolder course when "out" than they followed when "in." When they were entrenched within the walls of office they only thought of acting on the defensive and preserving their position. It was now to be seen whether they would make common cause with the people; but it was remarked that, even in their straits, they talked of a reform or a revision but never of a repeal of the Corn Laws. It had taken three years' agitation of the question to bring them to an eight shillings' duty. A further and a more energetic agitation for five years more, and five years more of intense suffering on the part of the people, were required to bring them to the recognition of thoroughly free-trade principles.

The League had not been disheartened by the defeat of the whig ministers, for they had rather stood in its way than helped it; and their tardy conversion had been only half-way to its principles. The union of every class of monopolists in support of the one great monopoly was only an incentive to renewed and additional activity. It had added Mr. J. S. Buckingham to the list of its lecturers,

and it had in view a still further extension of its operations. In my paper of the 14th August I wrote:—

“Parliament meets at Westminster on Thursday. The conference of ministers of the gospel upon the Corn Laws meets at Manchester on Tuesday. There will be about the same number of persons in the latter named assemblage as there are members of the House of Commons. The majority of the one owe their seats to intimidation, and to bribery, and corruption, in all the most painful forms. The united body of the other consists of pastors freely elected by their several congregations, enjoying their love and confidence, and deputed specially to represent their people on this important occasion, and to raise their voices against a law passed and sustained in contempt of every precept of religion and morality.

“Parliament meets in total ignorance of the course which will be dictated to it by the leaders of that majority which has been obtained through the venality, the stupidity, or the indifference, of the handful of voters whom it is the fashion of finality scribes to designate the people. It meets to wait the prescription of the state physician, Sir Robert Peel. It meets without any certainty that the Sangrados, Stanley, Graham, Inglis, and others of their depletion school, will be content to prescribe anything short of copious bleedings and hot-water drenchings. It meets without knowing whether the graduated dose or the fixed number of vegetable pills will be most acceptable to patients beginning to be impatient, and with Peel advising one course and the *Times* another.

“The conference takes place, not to discover the cause of national distress, but how, most effectually, to destroy a law, which its members are already aware occasions more wide and more intense misery than all the other bad laws in the statute book put together. It meets not to debate whether a silk gown shall be worn in the pulpit, or to institute an inquisitorial investigation as to the authorship of some wishy-washy sketch book, but to declare that the landlord-law is contrary to the law of God; to add to the information the members already possess of its mischievous workings; to accumulate evidence of the distress it occasions; and unitedly to resolve on the course which they shall individually follow when they return to their respective constituents. It will indeed be, as *The Anti-Bread-Tax Circular* justly observes, ‘a meeting which, viewed in relation to its object and the character of its members, has had no parallel in importance since the time of those great ecclesiastical councils which met to determine the faith of the early Christian world. In suspending, for a season, all arguments to the secular interests of our readers, we feel that we are only paying a proper homage to the tribunal before which our cause is about to be arraigned

—a tribunal which will judge the bread tax according to the revealed law of God, from which there can be no appeal in a Christian country.’”

The first meeting at which Christian ministers appeared in any number was on the occasion of a tea party, given to Mr. George Thompson, in the Manchester Corn Exchange. In June, the committee of the British India Society passed the following resolution :—

“The committee of the British India Society agrees that Mr. Thompson shall render his services gratuitously to the council of the National Anti-Corn-Law League during the present struggle for the abolition of the Corn Laws; Mr. Thompson, at the same time, retaining his connection with the British India Society. The committee further pledges itself to aid, to the extent of its ability, the Anti-Corn-Law League in its efforts to promote the establishment, and secure the recognition of the principles of free trade, and to this end the committee tenders the services, as a writer in the cause, of William Adams, Esq., their secretary, and editor of *The British India Advocate*.”

The council of the League gladly accepted this generous offer. Mr. Thompson had, from the commencement of the agitation, taken a warm interest in its advancement, and at Manchester, Edinburgh, and other places, had voluntarily given it his efficient aid. At a meeting of the council of the League the following resolution was passed unanimously :—“That the council of the National Anti-Corn-Law League recognises the legitimacy and importance of the objects sought by the British India Society, as stated in the address adopted as its constitution; that the council regards these objects as kindred to its own, and as inseparably connected with the establishment of free trade, and the protection of the best interests of the British Empire; and the council pledges itself, as far as it is competent, to co-operate with the British India Society upon the settlement of the question of the Corn Laws, now pending, for the attainment of its great object—justice to India.”

It was at the same time resolved to give a tea party to Mr. Thompson, to invite the presence of a number of his old and



distinguished friends in the anti-slavery contest, and to request the benevolent and universally respected Isaac Crewdson to take the chair. A committee of 44 ladies was appointed to make the preparations and to preside at the tea tables, amongst whom were, Lady Potter, Mrs. Brotherton, Mrs. Cobden, Mrs. Kershaw, Mrs. John Brooks, Mrs. D. Ainsworth, Mrs. Rawson, Mrs. Elkanah Armitage, Mrs. Burd, Mrs. G. Wilson, Mrs. Prentice, and others, all taking a deep interest in the question in which their husbands were so earnestly engaged. The meeting took place on the 25th of June. The Corn Exchange was elegantly fitted up for the occasion, and the party consisted of nearly 800 ladies and gentlemen. The chairman congratulated the meeting on obtaining the services of Mr. Thompson, and then introduced that gentleman, who was received with great applause, and spoke with his usual eloquence and power. At the close of his speech, he said: "I congratulate you that you have as president on this occasion, a man so justly beloved as my honoured friend who sits before you, and also on the unprecedented number of the ministers of religion who are here with us. Are they *with us* in the full import of the word? Not merely with their bodies but their souls, their sympathies and their best efforts? Then they would not have been so with us, I am certain, without first considering deeply, conscientiously, and prayerfully the merits of this great question. Their presence assures us that this cause has aspects under which many have not yet viewed it. Their presence assures us that our cause has claims which may not be despised; that there are obligations resting on us which will urge us on in the work upon which we have entered; not upon the narrow grounds of political expediency, or temporary necessity, but upon the high and impregnable foundations of immutable truth and justice." The subsequent speakers were the Rev. William Shuttleworth, Dr. Bowring, Rev. W. Gadsby, Mr. Joseph Thompson, Mr.



Moffat (the missionary to South Africa), Rev. R. Fletcher, Mr. Brotherton, Mr. Mark Philips, Rev. James Griffin, Mr. T. M. Gibson, Rev. J. Gwyther, Mr. C. Townley, Rev. J. W. Massie, Mr. L. Heyworth, and Mr. John Brooks.

Closely following the meeting was the issue of a circular, signed by Mr. George Thompson, addressed to ministers of religion in Manchester, requesting them to meet and confer upon the Christian means of obtaining a settlement of the Corn-Law question without injustice or civil convulsion. Twenty-eight ministers attended, and passed a resolution that it was desirable that a conference of ministers of religion, from all parts of the United Kingdom, should be held at Manchester, in the week between the 15th and 22nd of August, and a committee was appointed to issue the invitations and make the necessary arrangements. During these preparations, the Wesleyan Methodist Conference was assembled in Manchester, and an earnest invitation, signed by the Revs. Wm. McKerrow, James Wm. Massie, and Richard Fletcher, was sent to the president and ministers of that numerous body. Although five hundred copies were addressed to ministers attending the Conference, an answer from only one of them was received! It was not to be supposed that only one man of that number cared about the daily supply of daily bread. It was known that there were many who, in addition to their prayers that there might be abundance in the land and no complainings in the street, were willing to give their aid in promoting cheapness and plenty; but there was a powerful influence amongst the leaders of the Conference, which in former days had been exerted to resist the demand for Parliamentary Reform, and was now exerted to put down the demand for cheap bread. Hence the extraordinary fact, that, of the five hundred congregated, only one was found with courage enough to give in his adhesion to the cause of free trade in corn. The Wesleyan Methodists were looking to clergy reserves in Canada, and

to government aid to their schools ; and there were men uncharitable enough to say that many of the “ influential ’ of their number were looking for some provision similar to the *Regium Donum* bestowed upon the Presbyterians in Ireland. By what newspaper writers would call “ a curious coincidence,” the invitation to the Manchester meeting had been replied to by only one of the ministers of the Church of England—the Rev. Thomas Spencer—and but two of the ministers of the Church of Scotland. In addition to the objections sometimes made to the state payment of churches, may be named the mode of payment which, being regulated by the price of corn, gives to incumbents in those two establishments a direct interest in sustaining high prices. I leave my readers to judge how far that interest influenced their opinion upon the Corn Laws.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS OF RELIGION.

The Conference was opened in the Town Hall, Manchester, on the morning of Tuesday, August 17th. There was an attendance of nearly seven hundred ministers, all of whom were received in the houses of members of the League, and hospitably entertained during their week's stay. The morning meetings lasted four hours, the evening meetings five; and the report of the proceedings occupied a volume more than a third of the size of this. Of course, the history to be given here can only be a brief sketch. The Rev. Dr. Cox was appointed provisional chairman, and a provisional and an executive committee were appointed. A president for each day's conference was elected, and the Revs. W. Mc.Kerrow, Richard Fletcher, and J. W. Massie, were requested to act as secretaries. Mr. Mc.Kerrow stated that out of 1,500 replies which the committee had received, only six were decidedly opposed to the object of the meeting; about an equal number expressed doubts upon the subject, and the vast remainder were decidedly in favour of the movement. Amongst those who had written expressing their concurrence were, Dr. Chalmers, Dr. Burns, of Paisley, the Rev. Mr. Bunting, Dr. Heugh, Dr. Reed, Dr. Wardlaw, and the Rev. Mr. Bulmer.

After this preliminary business, the Rev. T. Adkins, of Southampton, took the chair of the conference, and opened

the business in an eloquent speech, in which he alluded to a long succession of synods, and councils, and meetings of ministers of religion for various purposes, recorded in ecclesiastical history, and said :—

“The meeting of that morning was unprecedented and unparalleled, convened not to place themselves in hostile array sect against sect, and party against party, within the narrow lines of sectarian demarkation; not to hurl against each other the *brutum fulmen* of excommunication, placing on the unhappy victims of their wrath the ban of exclusive impiety here, and final perdition hereafter, and not to harmonise the jarring Shiboleth of conflicting creeds; but impressed with an object greater than which can hardly enter into the mind of the most eminent Christian, and less than which will not satisfy our aspirations.” He vindicated the conference from the charge that they were acting out of the line of their duty as Christian ministers. “I have yet to learn,” said he, “that that Christianity which was adapted, not only to man’s mental and moral, but to his social condition, does violence to the exercise of, or extinguishes the intensity of that great social principle, by which the hearts of men are linked together throughout the whole human race.”

After contrasting the greatness of our country in arts and arms, in science and literature, in commercial enterprise and manufacturing skill, with the distress which prevailed among our artizans and peasants, he thus described the cause of the anomaly :—

“On the other side of the water is a land in which, either from the paucity of its population or the fertility of its soil, there is bread enough and to spare. There they have the *pabulum* of life sufficient to repay the labour of industry, and to supply the wants of necessity. Yes, gentlemen—for while I would use caution, I will not indulge in cowardice—yes, and your starving population is willing to purchase that *pabulum* of life; not, indeed, with wealth,—for, like the poor disciples of a poorer master, they shake their tattered garments, and say, ‘Silver and gold we have none,’ but they are willing to purchase food with the well-strained sinews of nervous industry, with the sweat of their honest brows. And why cannot they purchase that? Why is there not the promotion of that simple, but no less effectual arrangement in the economy of the universe, by which the various productions of one country may be reciprocated with advantage, by communications made from another? Why is this machinery, so simple in its construction,

but so multifarious and withal so benign in its results,—why is it thus retarded? Pardon me, if I say it is because we see, or think we see, a busy, bungling hand, a cruel and clumsy hand, put on this delicate machinery, to retard its movements and to frustrate its purpose. We believe this, men, brethren, and fathers, or our convention here this day is but a nullity and a farce.”

Mr. Adkins was followed by the venerable and Rev. Dr. Pye Smith, who delivered an address replete with the deepest religious sympathy for the suffering poor, and evincing a knowledge of the subject to be discussed which proved that he, at least, had not been an idle or unobservant spectator of the body and soul destroying effects of the food monopoly. He disclaimed, on the part of his brethren, any pretension to make laws or regulations, or any desire to bind the consciences of their fellow Christians, or to command their practice. “But while,” said he, “we disavow unfounded assumptions, we advance a claim, but of a very different kind; we elevate another kind of authority—the claim of reason and love, the authority of ‘the righteous Lord, who loveth righteousness’ and whose servants we are, not for our own aggrandisement, but for the universal good of mankind.” In reference to the Corn Laws, he said:—

“They had their origin in the night of ignorant and barbarous ages when men were trampled down by absurd and wicked monopolies and other usages, the outbreaks and badges of that insolent feudal tyranny which oppressed both nations and princes; and thus the human mind was abased to a low pitch of degradation: education and mental culture were extremely rare, knowledge and improvement had only a very slow and limited diffusion, and men in general were accustomed to respect no argument but that of brute force. He contended that the doctrine and practice of free trade was in harmony with the essential principle and the benevolent design of the gospel. In answer to the objection, that it was not befitting in ministers of religion to give opinions or advice on politics, he entered his determined protest. What are politics, he demanded, but the knowledge and practice of the claims of right and the obligations of duty which belong to men as members of society? Is not this knowledge and practice an essential part of morality? And is there, can there be, any religion without morality? As teachers of religion,



therefore, we are bound to be teachers of politics, and to guard the important subject against errors and abuses. Our object is to teach the politics which flow from piety, the politics of equitable benevolence, the politics of the gospel, and the politics of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour." He drew a fearful picture of the probable consequences of a continuance of our present suicidal policy, and concluded in the following impressive terms:—"Our warm desire is to see realised the beautiful passage of the Book of Job, 'So the poor hath hope, and iniquity stoppeth her mouth.' We likewise indulge the hope, that the facts which will be detailed by the Christian ministers, who can bear testimony to the state of the manufacturing and labouring poor; will, by their statements, be presented to the public notice in a manner which will obtain the merited attention of all classes, and in every part of our country. We cherish the hope that the evidence supplied by this meeting will avail to dissipate the pernicious errors which are current in some important circles, and which led one of the highest order of the peerage to say in Parliament that the efforts to obtain the abrogation of the Corn Laws proceeded from a few rich manufacturers, who wished to avoid giving just wages to their workmen. May the God of mercy grant, my honoured brethren, that your conversation, your resolution, your holy example in the walks of daily life, your influence, your prayers, may be efficacious, for the averting of evil, and the acquisition of blessings above all we ask or think."

The Rev. J. W. Massie, who had recently become pastor of an Independent church, in Salford, and who soon became an active and influential promulgator of the principles of free trade, said that 650 ministers had accepted the invitations sent them, and at least an equal number had signified their approval of the conference, and thus, he said, in some thirteen or fifteen hundred localities, in fifteen hundred communities, and through fifteen hundred agencies, they would bring this great moral question before hundreds of thousands of their suffering fellow countrymen; so that they felt that if, at this moment, the conference were to be separated, and its different members scattered, they would carry with them an unity of sentiment and action which would not be lost, and which would give a stimulus to public opinion, in certain quarters, which it was very desirable to see properly moved.

There were present, he said, ministers of congregations who had come, some two, some three, and some nearly four hundred miles distance, at their own expense.

At the opening of the afternoon's meeting, a resolution was passed unanimously, that Mr. Cobden should be requested to address the conference. Mr. Cobden, on coming forward, was received with warm plaudits, frequently renewed. He said he appeared before the conference as the representative of the National Anti-Corn-Law League, deputed to explain the grounds on which that body advocated a repeal of the Corn Laws :

" They had entered on that inquiry without reference to party considerations, to expediency, or to class interests; and they had come to the conclusion that no tax imposed upon the food of the people could be just. He showed the injustice of the bread-tax by its unequal pressure upon the poor man, whose family, with an income of ten shillings per week, eat as much bread as that of the *millionaire* or nobleman; and that while it took twenty per cent. out of the income of every unskilled labourer in the kingdom, it did not abstract from the duke, with £150,000 a-year, a thousandth part of one per cent. The enormity of this was enhanced by the fact that this was not a tax for the purpose of revenue, but a tax levied upon the poor man's cupboard for the benefit of the rich man. On these and similar grounds, the fundamental principle of the Anti-Corn-Law League had been the total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws. The honourable member in a very able manner combated the wages fallacy, insisting upon it that the repeal of the bread tax, so far from reducing, would tend to advance the rate of wages, by increasing the demand for labour. To show the operation of the present law in reducing wages, he instanced the frame-work knitters of Nottingham, who, in 1816, immediately after the passing of it, received 18s. a-week for less labour than they now perform for 8s. He viewed the question as it affected commerce, and showed how it was with the Corn Laws, an importation of foreign grain in times of scarcity must drain this country of its gold; for the law confined the trade in corn to jobbers and speculators, shutting out the honest merchant who dared not enter into it. He called upon the ministers, and especially those from the agricultural districts, to supply facts bearing upon the question of wages, and it would be seen that the class for whose benefit the Corn Laws were said to exist were receiving less wages than any other class of labourers. Mr. Cobden argued several other points of the question,

and concluded with an earnest appeal to the religious sympathies of his audience, and said there wanted but the mighty impulse this conference could give, the greatest impulse that could affect the human mind in any country, and infinitely the greatest that can move a religious country such as this; there wanted but that this conference, at the conclusion of its meeting, would declare that this bread tax, which was systematically contrived, and cunningly framed, to put the whole country in want of the first necessities of life; to declare that the law was opposed to the law of God, was anti-scriptural and anti-christian, and the Corn Laws would be from that moment virtually abolished."

A resolution was then passed, that the remainder of the evening should be devoted to the detail by members of the conference, as to the condition of the working classes in their respective localities. The Revds. T. Spencer, of Bath, Timothy East, of Birmingham, J. Sibree, of Coventry, J. Colston, of Styall, A. Bird, of Paisley, Mr. Davies, of Lewes, Mr. Bailey, of Sheffield, D. Hearne, of Manchester, Mr. Strachan, of Forfar, Mr. Winterbottom, of Howarth, near Bradford, Mr. Price, of Wales, Mr. Berry, of Leicestershire, Mr. Hunter, of Nottingham, Mr. Jenkins, of Wales, and Mr. Stirling, of Kirriemuir, successively addressed the meeting in speeches teeming with facts regarding the condition of the poor, of the most painful and thrilling interest. At about half-past nine in the evening it was discovered that Earl Ducie was present, and at the request of the chairman an invitation was conveyed to him to address the conference. His lordship complied with the request, and in the course of a speech of some length he said: "I have for many years been of opinion that the Corn Laws, as they exist, are extremely oppressive to the labouring population, and injurious to every branch of society. Had I been a monopolist,—had I been one of those who had voted for charging an additional price on the food of the poor man—I am quite sure that the testimony laid before you to-day by the reverend gentlemen who have spoken would have been enough to persuade me that I had been in the wrong. It would have

been enough to persuade me that I should retract those opinions. But my opinions have always been those good old-fashioned opinions that that government was the best which gave the greatest amount of happiness to the greatest number of its subjects."

At the second day's meeting, which commenced on Wednesday morning before ten o'clock, the chair was taken by the Rev. W. Chaplin, of Bishops Stortford, who called upon Mr. Curtis, a gentleman from Ohio, in the United States, invited by the League to come to this country and aid the movement, who addressed the conference on the advantages which would result from a free and open trade in corn with America. He said it was the most anxious wish of his country, to which he came to give his express testimony, to exchange the food with which their garners were filled, and which Englishmen need to sustain nature, for English manufactures. He gave a glowing description of the power of America to supply wheat, laid down in Liverpool at 47s. a quarter, to an extent equal to all the wants of England. In referring to the question of wages he said: "A most absurd and barefaced fallacy has gained currency, namely, that the high prices of food will bring high prices for labour; that there is a correspondence somewhere or other between the prices of food and the wages of labour. In our State of Ohio we know that this is a fallacy. There the wages of an unskilled labouring man are four shillings and sixpence a-day; and good wheat is only twenty-seven shillings a quarter, and beef only three-halfpence a pound, and bacon and pork in the same proportion. Now if wages were regulated by the price of food, how came it that wages were higher in the United States than in England and Ireland."

The Rev. Dr. Vaughan, of London, afterwards president of the Lancashire Independent College, moved: "That this conference, drawn together from various parts of the United Kingdom, by a general conviction of the existence



of long continued and still increasing distress, affecting the community at large, and bearing with peculiar severity on the industrious classes, finds this conviction deeply confirmed by various statements and documentary evidence now laid before them, which clearly prove that vast numbers are incapable of obtaining, by their labour, a sufficiency of the common necessities of life, for the support of themselves and their families." In the course of an eloquent and very impressive speech Dr. Vaughan said :—

" There never was a commercial power so powerful as that of the British empire before, or having such a command of the deep, or having such wealth at disposal for the purpose of placing the granaries of the world at its service ; and yet we were the first commercial power in the world ever known to entertain a fear lest we should starve for want of corn. If we looked at the shores of Phœnicia, where the first great commercial cities made their appearance, Tyre and Sidon, and where all the great articles of merchandise now manufactured in Manchester and Birmingham, were produced—why those great cities, " whose merchants were princes," never dreamt of raising corn. They never thought of starving: the deep was before them ; their navy gallantly floated on its surface—although that navy consisted of small and insignificant boats compared with ours—as long as they had their navy, and bold and gallant hearts within them, they knew no fear. Go to ancient Greece. The most ancient of its cities was Corinth, situated upon a little isthmus eight square miles in extent, four of which were occupied by the town, the rest was an open green upon which the people assembled for their recreation. They had no corn fields ; and yet we read that Corinth maintained a commerce with all parts of the world, and with most of the cities of Europe. Go to Venice, when it bore the proud name of the ocean Rome. Why, she had not a single acre of land but what was worked up out of the sea. Yet Venice never dreamt of waking up some fine morning, and finding herself in a state of starvation for want of bread. Let us come nearer home and look at other commercial states and we find it still the same. If we come to Portugal and Spain, which successively became the great commercial powers of Europe, they never thought of such an arrangement as this : and as for those noble people the Dutch, who not only wrested their liberty from the iron grasp of a world in arms, but became respected by every power in Europe—why, it could be shown that, they did not grow corn enough for one single town. It was clear that Spain and Austria would have starved them if they could ;—but then France and the rest of the world



had an interest in saying they should not be starved, and the consequence was there was no fear of their being starved. These were important facts; for really if we could believe that these were our commercial men who were so feeble hearted, he should be inclined to ask, 'How could it be that spirits, so unworthy, had attained to commercial power?' but it was not—it was only a feeble misguided faction."

The Rev. James Robertson, of Edinburgh, in seconding the resolution asked if, when the claims of humanity were put forth, ministers were to sit still and do nothing, and reminded his hearers of the anathema, "he that withholdeth corn the people shall curse him." The Rev. Jas. Ragland, of Hindley, in supporting the resolution gave a frightful history of the distress endured at Wigan and its vicinity. The motion was carried unanimously. Another resolution, moved by the Rev. Benjamin Parsons, of Ebley, near Stroud; seconded by the Rev. Charles Berry, of Leicester, was also carried unanimously: "That in the judgment of this conference, the prevailing distress painfully tends to arrest the progress of education, to prevent the exercise of domestic and social affections, to induce reckless and immoral habits, to prevent attendance on religious worship, and to harden the heart against religious impressions."

The Rev. W. Thompson, of Swansea, moved the next resolution: "That influenced at once by feelings of sympathy with the suffering poor, with whom their official duties bring them into daily contact, and by a deep interest in the success of the religion whereof they are ministers, this conference feels itself only acting from a strong sense of duty in examining into the causes of the existing distress, and from the example of our Saviour himself, in employing its utmost influence to alleviate or improve it." The motion seconded, in a powerful speech, by the Rev. T. Spencer, of Bath, and supported by the Rev. S. J. Phillips, of Woolton, was carried unanimously.

The Rev. Dr. Payne, of Exeter, after vindicating the

right of ministers to take part in questions deeply affecting the rights of humanity, moved: "That in the face of the facts which have come under their notice in their own respective neighbourhoods, no less than by statements laid before them, the ministers of this conference cannot avoid the painful conviction that much of the wide-spread distress of the present time is attributable to Provision Laws, inasmuch as they limit the supply, and thereby enhancing the price of the common necessities of life, fetter industry, repress enterprise, divert the legitimate employment of capital, and spread discontent and heart-burning through the land." The Rev. H. Harvey, of Glasgow, seconded the motion; and gave an account of the deplorable condition of the weavers in one of the districts of that city.

Dr. Ritchie, of Edinburgh, then moved: "That, believing that the laws of Almighty God, as revealed in his word, ought to be the laws of human action, and that any deviation from them, either in individual conduct or in the affairs of nations, must excite his displeasure; and believing that the monopoly of bread is anti-christian in principle, this conference will seek the removal of the Provision Laws, and more especially deprecates their continuance as a great national offence against that Being by whom kings reign and princes decree justice." The motion, seconded by Mr. Clapp, of Appledoom, Devonshire, was carried unanimously.

The conference was subsequently addressed by the Revs. J. E. Giles, of Leeds, F. J. Archer, of Blessington, in the county of Antrim, T. Swan, of Birmingham, T. Adkins, of Southampton, J. Edwards, of Nottingham, R. Melsom, of Birmingham (one of the Wesleyan Conference), R. W. Hamilton, of Leeds, J. Freeman, of Walthamstow, and J. Carlisle, of London, and the following resolutions were passed:—

"That the laws which restrict the importation of the prime necessities

of life are, in the judgment of this conference, essentially and manifestly unjust, and operate with peculiar hardship on the operative classes, by at once depriving them of a market for the disposal of the fruits of their labour, and raising the price of food when they are least able to procure it."

"That, in the undeniable fact of reciprocal dependance of the several branches of the human family, this conference, recognising the admirable provision of the all-wise, beneficent Creator, for securing the individual happiness, maintaining their peaceful intercourse, and enhancing their collective welfare, in consequence feels itself solemnly bound to declare its uncompromising hostility to those legislative enactments which prevent the ever increasing population of this country from exchanging the products of their industry and skill, which they are especially enabled to proffer, for the food which they so much need, and which other countries are so well able and most anxious to give in return for them."

"That no effectual relief can be supplied, either by parochial assessments or the benefactions of private or associated charity; that the necessary remedy for the existing distress is full employment and adequate remuneration; and that it is in vain to hope to alleviate the labouring classes from their present depression, so long as the existing system of Provision Laws continued to interpose between the bounties of God and the necessities of his creatures."

"That this conference deeply interested in the maintenance of the various benevolent and religious institutions which exist in our country, and which depend for their support on the general prosperity of the community, is penetrated with the conviction that the resources of many of those institutions have been materially affected by the prevailing distress, which should be speedily and effectually alleviated. Christians, instead of enlarging, must contract their sphere of benevolence."

At the opening of the third day's conference, the Rev. Dr. Cox in the chair, a deputation from the working men of Messrs. Sharp and Roberts, engineers and machine makers, was introduced, and one of them read an address to the members, signed by Benjamin Fothergill, chairman, John Alley and R. Tennant, secretaries, and by 614 workmen. The document was highly creditable to that numerous body, who, although all in employment and with good wages, sympathized deeply with their less fortunate fellow townsmen, whose misery they said was "heart-rending and

appalling." The address concluded thus: "The prayers of many who are ready to perish is with you, and their blessings are upon your endeavours to aid in procuring them that share of the means of subsistence, which was designed and is provided by the Creator of all things." A deputation of hand-loom weavers was then introduced, and read an address to the conference, and, in reply to questions put by several of the ministers, made statements, as to the condition of their fellow workmen, which very deeply affected their audience. The conference was addressed by the Reverends Dr. Redford, of Worcester; W. Macdougall, of Kilmarnock; J. Young, of Andover; T. Morgan, of Birmingham; J. E. Good, of Gosport; J. Barfett, of Salisbury; W. Ferguson, of Bicester; W. Giles, of Liverpool; J. N. Goulty, of Brighton; Dr. Perry, of Reading; H. G. Rhodes, of Sheffield; H. Atley, of Frome; W. P. Davies, of Ashburton; R. Slate, of Preston; T. Mann, of Trowbridge; D. Ronald, of Saltcoats, in Ayrshire; Mr. Smith, of Rotherham; J. G. Miall, of Bradford; and J. Peters, of Rochdale, all of them testifying to the distress in their respective localities, and attributing it mainly to the operation of the Provision Laws.

At the evening meeting the Rev. W. M'Kerrow read a letter from Mr. Candlish, of Edinburgh, a minister of the Church of Scotland, approving generally of the objects of the conference, and regretting that he could not be present. Dr. Chalmers and Dr. Candlish, who had given in their adhesion to the cause of free trade, were soon to be engaged in an earnest agitation for a free church in their native land, and were the leaders of a body of ministers who sacrificed, at least, £100,000 a-year, to escape from the state dictation, which had accompanied state "sustentation." The Rev. J. Ackworth, of Horton College, Bradford, read an address to the Queen, which embodied the resolutions that had been passed, and prayed her generous interposition on behalf of her suffering people. The



motion was seconded by the Rev. R. Fletcher, and carried by acclamation; and the Rev. Mr. Smith, tutor of Rotherham Academy, moved that it should be presented by the Rev. Dr. Cox, D.D. and L.L.D., the Rev. Thos. Spencer, A.M., and the Rev. Messrs. Atkinson, Chaplin, Massie, Fletcher, and M'Kerrow. The Reverend Dr. Vaughan seconded the motion, and it was carried unanimously.

George Thompson, Esq., was then called upon, came forward amidst the most enthusiastic manifestation of applause, and read an eloquent address to the people of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, earnestly exhorting those who were suffering from the operation of the Corn and Provision Laws "to be peaceful and loyal, and to co-operate in all christian and constitutional efforts to effect their extinction, with patience relying upon the sympathies of their friends and the blessing of the Most High." The Rev. Mr. Hinton, seconded by the Rev. Mr. Massie, moved the adoption of the address. It was agreed to, and ordered to be printed, and circulated throughout the kingdom, an order which was faithfully executed by the League in its wide-spread ramifications, aided by the ministers on their return to their respective congregations, and by the newspaper press, the most influential part of which was now giving publicity to the progress of the great movement, although the "leading journal" had not yet acknowledged it as a great "fact." A petition to the House of Commons was moved by the Rev. Mr. Scales, which concluded with the following prayer: "Your petitioners therefore convinced of the sinfulness of these laws, which violate the paramount law of God, and restrict the bounty of his providence; of their injurious operations on the domestic comforts, and the social, moral, and religious condition of the people of these realms; of the vast amount of evil which they have already produced, and of the fearful rapidity with which they are driving on their injured and suffering victims to despondency or despera-



tion, and threatening the peace and safety of the empire, implore your honourable house, as you fear that God who is the friend and avenger of the poor, as you love that country whose interests are committed into your hand, to take into your early and serious consideration the Provision Laws, and especially the Corn Laws, which have wrought this enormous amount of evil and misery, for the purpose of devising such means as to your honourable house may seem meet for their abolition." The Rev. W. M'Kerrow seconded the motion and the petition was adopted.

The Rev. J. P. Mursell said he was anxious that the meeting should have some practical result, and that he should be sorry if it could be said that they had met to discuss a secular question without doing something in their religious capacity; he, therefore, moved, "That this conference earnestly recommends, to all who may approve of it, to set apart Monday, the 6th of September, as a day of humiliation before Almighty God, on account of our sins, and for solemn prayer, that it might please him in his mercy to remove the distress which at this time afflicts the poor, and to endow our senators, at this important crisis with wisdom." This resolution, which was widely acted upon, was seconded by the Rev. J. Webb, of Arnsby, Leicestershire, and carried. A pledge to use individual effort until the Corn Laws were abolished, was proposed by the Rev. A. Somerville, seconded by Dr. Halley, and adopted. A deputation, consisting of Messrs. E. Watkin, G. Hargreave, Stephen Neale, James Hague, and J. H. Oswald, were then introduced, and presented an address from the Operative Anti-Corn-Law Association, and the chairman having encouraged the members of the deputation to continue their useful labours, gave them the right hand of fellowship, and they retired amidst loud cheers. The conference adjourned at a quarter to nine o'clock.

The fourth day's conference was opened on Friday

morning. As it was understood that the proceedings would close that day, the number of ministers present was not so many as at the previous meetings, but there was no abatement of the interest manifested by the public on the important disclosures made as to the condition of the people in various parts of the kingdom. After an eloquent address from the chairman, the following committee was appointed to carry out the resolutions of the conference:—Revs. Messrs. Mc.Kerrow, Fletcher, Massie, Lee, Beardsall, Gwyther, F. A. Cox, D.D., Carlisle, Hinton, Harvey, Adkins, Chaplin, T. Spencer, R. Vaughan, D.D., James Robinson, and Alexander Harvey. The meeting was afterwards addressed by the Revs. G. Hoyle, of Stalybridge; P. Gunn, of County Fermanagh; G. Harris, of Kingwood; E. Good, of Gosport; W. Malden, of Chichester; M. A. Garvey, of London; G. Armstrong, of Bristol; W. Giles, of Liverpool; I. Sedgewick, of Brighton; W. Scott, of Airedale; H. Solly, of Yeovil; T. Jones, of Wrexham; T. Smith, one of the tutors of Rotherham College; W. Auld, of Greenock; and Thos. Gisborne, late M.P. for Carlow.

In the afternoon meeting, the hall presented a novel appearance, the greater part of the seats previously set apart for members exhibiting a large sprinkling of ladies and laymen. The hall in every part was densely crowded, though fewer ministers were present than at any former sitting. At twenty minutes to five o'clock, the Rev. Thos. Spencer resumed the chair. He said a few more gentlemen might address the meeting for five minutes each. Mr. Brown, of Wareham, moved:—"That the most cordial thanks of this conference be given to the worshipful the mayor and the boroughreeve of this borough, for the kindness with which they have granted the use of the Town Hall for its accommodation." The motion was seconded by the Rev. J. Gwyther, and passed. The speakers, this afternoon, were the Revs. A. M. Browne, of Poole; J. W. Goulty, of Brighton; and A. Campbell, of Greenock.

The Rev. J. Griffin, of Manchester, moved, "That the council of the Anti-Corn-Law League be admitted to address the conference, according to their request." After some remarks by the Rev. J. Wiseman, of Wick, the deputation was introduced by Mr. Massie. It consisted of the following gentlemen :—Sir Thomas Potter, R. Cobden, Esq., M.P., Messrs. Geo. Wilson (chairman of the council), Alderman Walker, Elkanah Armitage, Alderman Kershaw, Thomas Bazley, jun., William Rawson, Alderman Brooks, Henry Rawson, Archibald Prentice, George Thompson, William Bickham, and James Howie. They were received with loud and reiterated applause. Mr. Cobden then read the following address :—

"To the Christian Ministers of all denominations, in conference assembled, for the consideration of the laws restricting the food of the people, the address of the Executive Council of the Anti-Corn-Law League, in Manchester.

"Reverend Sirs,—We beg respectfully to tender you our earnest and grateful thanks for the zealous and truly Christian services which you have rendered to the cause of humanity, and to express our acknowledgments for the sanction which your dignified proceedings have given to your past labours, and from which we shall derive increased encouragement, and a new stimulus to our future efforts.

"The religious world will regard the acts of your conference as a noble illustration of the true spirit of a Christian ministry, whose benign influence can never be more consistently exerted than when vindicating the cause of the poor and destitute.

"We highly appreciate the minute and startling array of evidence brought by you from all parts of the empire, and proving on such unimpeachable testimony, the physical and moral degradation of great numbers of the people, as well in the agricultural as in the manufacturing counties. You have thus made it manifest that, during the long continuance of extreme scarcity and dearness of provisions, consequent upon unwise and unjust legislation, the condition of the labouring classes has rapidly deteriorated; that the demand for labour has declined; that wages, notwithstanding the assertion of the monopolists to the contrary, have materially decreased; and that, from these causes, multitudes of our industrious fellow-countrymen have been cruelly and needlessly subjected to all the evils of misery, disease, and premature death.

“ Sympathising with you in the still augmenting distress of our poorer brethren, and fortified by the facts with which your testimony has supplied us, we shall continue to advocate, and with renewed energy, the abolition of these impious laws, which, by limiting the food of the people, and restricting the demand for labour, have been the main source of the manifold ills now afflicting the community.

“ Whilst giving expression to our grateful sense of the inestimable value of your present labours, permit us to beseech your continued efforts in furtherance of the righteous and philanthropic work in which, as Christians, you have engaged.

“ We would earnestly entreat you, in your respective spheres of usefulness, individually to use the influence of your sacred calling, in awakening the public mind to the national importance of this great question.

“ We rely on the moral weight of your example; we trust much to the efficacy of your pulpit exhortations; we feel that to your supplications at the throne of the Most High, the poor and wretched may yet look with humble hope, and to the Christian confidence that justice, so long denied, will at last be rendered them; and resting with firm reliance on your patriotic efforts, we look forward, with well-grounded assurance, to the early and triumphant issue of a struggle, on which depends the happiness or misery of millions of our fellow creatures, and the irretrievable ruin of our beloved country.

“ GEORGE WILSON, Chairman.”

Mr. Cobden, in concluding the reading of the address, was greeted with loud cheering. The chairman briefly addressed the deputation. He trusted that it had been satisfactorily demonstrated, from the representations made during the sittings of the conference, that a repeal of the Corn Laws would be beneficial, not only to the manufacturers but the labourers, the agriculturists, and ultimately to the landowners themselves. They had assembled to serve no political party, but simply to further the cause of suffering humanity. A motion, that the address be received, and entered upon the minutes of the conference, was then made and agreed to. After an eloquent and impassioned address from Mr. George Thompson, which was frequently interrupted by the enthusiastic cheers of the meeting, a vote of thanks was passed to the chairman, to the ministers of Manchester for convening the conference,



and to the honorary secretaries, which closed the proceedings of the convocation.

On the day in which the conference was opened in Manchester, the following resolutions were passed at a meeting of ministers in connection with the congregational dissenters of Carnarvonshire, held in the Independent Chapel, at Sharon, near Carnarvon :—

“That the present Corn Laws are impolitic in principle, unjust in operation, and cruel in effect; they are condemned throughout the sacred volume; they are opposed to the benignity of the Creator, and they are at variance with the very spirit of Christianity !

“That it is the sacred duty of every Christian sect, denomination, and creed, to use every means and every influence within their power, towards having such unjust and unchristian laws removed from among the statutes of this great empire.

“We, therefore, from our souls, sympathise with our brethren met in conference, and earnestly pray that the blessing of the Almighty, in whose hands are the destinies of nations and kingdoms, may crown their holy labours with triumphant success.

“W. Williams, Carnarvon.	John Williams, Llanberis.
Richard Parry, Conway.	Griffith Thomas, Sharon.
W. Ambrose, Port Madoc.	John Sennar, Llansaintffraid.
James Jones, Cupel Helyg.	David Davies, Colwyn.
Owen Thomas, Talysern.	William Hughes, Sharon.”

Advantage was taken of the presence of so many ministers in Manchester, to hold two great tea parties in the Corn Exchange; one on Thursday evening, of the Young Men's Anti-Monopoly-Association; and the other, on Friday evening, each attended by eight hundred persons, including a great number of ladies, the principal speakers being the Rev. T. Adkins, the Rev. Mr. Bailey, Earl Ducie, Rev. T. Spencer, Mr. George Thompson, Mr. Gisborne, and the Rev. W. Gadsby. For several weeks after these gatherings, accounts reached the League from towns and villages in all parts of the kingdom, at which ministers, who had been present at the conference, had given a history of its proceedings, and exhorted their hearers to put heir hands to the good work.



## CHAPTER X I.

### MEETING OF PARLIAMENT.

Parliament met on the 19th August, and the Commons elected their Speaker. On the 24th the Lord Chancellor read the Queen's Speech, which was quite as explicit on the subject of free trade as any one could expect. After stating Her Majesty's anxiety that the revision of duties affecting the production of foreign countries should be taken into consideration, the assembled Parliament was told: "It will be for you to consider whether some of these duties are not so trifling in amount as to be unproductive to the revenue, while they are vexatious to commerce. You may further examine whether the principle of protection, upon which others of those duties are founded, be not carried to an extent injurious alike to the income of the state and the interests of the people. Her Majesty is desirous that you should consider the laws which regulate the trade in corn. It will be for you to determine whether these laws do not aggravate the natural fluctuations of supply, whether they do not embarrass trade, derange the currency, and by their operation diminish the comfort and increase the privations of the great body of the community. Her Majesty feeling the deepest sympathy with those of her subjects who are now suffering from distress and want of employment, it is her earnest prayer that all your deliberations may be guided by

wisdom, and may conduce to the happiness of her beloved people."

It was a bold course taken by the whig administration to recommend such a speech from the throne, unless we attribute the courage to despair. The House of Lords, composed exclusively of landowners, and independent of the people's suffrages, was not likely to re-echo the acknowledgment of distress occasioned by selfish legislation, nor was the House of Commons, constituted by the Reform Bill to give a preponderance to the landed interest, and elected at a period when great distrust prevailed amongst reformers and free traders as to the intentions of the whig administration, likely to adopt the liberal commercial policy recommended. Everybody knew what would be the immediate, nobody knew what would be the ultimate result. That the whigs would be defeated every body knew—that the very same Parliament under a tory administration would reform the tariff to a greater extent than the whigs contemplated, and totally repeal the Corn Laws, which the whigs proposed only to modify, nobody could have dreamed of.

The debate upon the address, in the Lords on Tuesday August 24th, was a Corn-Law debate, ministers and their supporters endeavouring to show that an eight-shilling duty would not ruin the agriculturists; and their opponents, not knowing what was to come, protesting against any changes. Earl Spencer who moved the address, himself a practical agriculturist, gave evidence that the Corn Laws afforded no protection to the farmer, and that the substitution of a moderate fixed duty would not throw land out of cultivation. Earl Fitzwilliam, one of the largest landowners in the kingdom, spoke to the same effect. Lord Brougham declared that he was in favour of a total repeal of the Corn Law, but would prefer its accomplishment gradually. The Duke of Wellington who, some ten years before, had declared that the representative system needed

no reform, now declared that the country, under the Corn Law, was the best country in the world for a poor man. The former declaration helped to carry the Reform Bill, the latter to hasten the repeal of the landlords' monopoly. The Duke of Richmond, in like manner, helped the cause which he was bitterly opposing. He said: "As to the proximate ministry turning round and refusing protection—if they did so, then he said, in the name of the agricultural interest, that they would turn out the new ministry also." The expectant physician, reserving his prescription until he was regularly "called in,"—the expectant minister must have boiled with indignation when he was thus told that he must be the mere servant and tool of the least enlightened part of the aristocracy, or be turned out at their bidding. The Earl of Ripon, (Cobbett's "Prosperity Robinson,") after complaining bitterly of the calumnies of the League, uttered against all who were in favour of protection, showing that its truths had been felt and feared, moved an amendment which expressed the alarm of Parliament at the continued excess of expenditure over income, promised careful consideration of the interests recommended to the house, but declared that nothing could be done while the government did not possess the confidence of the country, and that her Majesty's present ministers did not possess the confidence of the house or of the country. Lord Melbourne, roused from his usual indifference by the attacks upon the administration of which he was the head, gave utterance to some bold truths. He had formerly said it was madness to think of repealing the Corn Laws. Probably in allusion to that inconsiderate declaration he now said: "I have certainly been, on former occasions, for putting off the agitation and discussion of this question, which, whenever it came on, I knew must be attended with inconvenient circumstances, but I always knew that it must come. I always knew that it was not to be avoided. I always knew that it was entirely a

question of time, and I beg of your lordships to consider what I have always looked upon as the pinch of this question, namely, that *these laws have been introduced and supported by those who have a direct interest in maintaining them.* They were sanctioned by two houses of legislature, one of which is *entirely* composed of landholders, and the *majority* of the other consists of the same class. I say that this is not a state of things which we should look upon with complacency. I am not accustomed to speak in the language of dictation or of admonition; but I tell you it is *not safe* for the governing powers of a country to stand in such a situation as to be open to an imputation of so popular, so plausible, and so specious a nature as that which I have described; and I do assure your lordships that you will find it absolutely necessary to put these laws, some day or other, on a more reasonable and satisfactory foundation."

Probably had his lordship and his colleagues spoken thus boldly two years before, they would have preserved the majority they possessed when they accepted office. The utterance of such truths should not have been reserved until they saw that they must inevitably relinquish power. The house thought one night's discussion enough for the matter under their consideration, and, dividing, the numbers were:—

For Lord Ripon's amendment..... 168

For the address..... 96

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Majority against ministers..... 72

The result of the debate in the Lords was a strong encouragement to the monopolists, and the aspirants to office in the Commons, where the debate, however, lasted throughout four nights. The compliment was paid to Manchester (it ought to have been paid earlier) of asking Mr. Mark Philips to move the address, which he did in a speech highly creditable to himself and to the large con-

stituency which he represented, but although he made the Corn Law the main subject of his remarks, and although Mr. Labouchere warned the house that "the markets once lost would be lost for ever," the tory chiefs would not be drawn into discussion, preferring to put forward Mr. B. D'Israeli, nothing loath, to rail against the general policy of the government. Mr. Stuart Wortley moved an amendment similar to that which had been passed in the other house.

On the second night's debate the same very cautious policy was observed. Mr. Ewart, Mr. Ward, Dr. Bowring, Mr. P. M. Stuart, and Mr. Sharman Crawford successively addressed the house most effectively, so far as argument and statement went, but without drawing out any leading defender of the monopoly. Mr. Cobden then made his first appearance, and by his obvious sincerity, his earnestness, his declared independence of all parties, his straightforward arguments, and his undeniable statements, made a powerful impression on a house disposed to receive him unfavourably, and little believing that the out-of-doors agitator would at once take rank amongst the most effective debaters there. Still the opposition leaders held back. A Mr. Bailey, one of their underlings made faint play, but his argument was demolished by Mr. Brotherton. Lord Worsley alone attempted to controvert the arguments of Mr. Cobden, but without success—and the second night's debate terminated.

The third night's debate was opened by Lord Sandon, who deprecated any discussion on the Corn Laws, the great question, he said, being whether ministers had or had not the confidence of the house. Mr. Milner Gibson assured him that the great question was not thus to be stifled. Mr. Borthwick (formerly the paid advocate of the slave owners in our colonies), with due humility, followed in the wake of Lord Sandon, and Colonel Sibthorp followed, appropriately, in the wake of Peter Borthwick. The main



speech of the night was by Mr. Baring, who commented forcibly on the silence maintained by the leaders on the other side, and drew out his probable successor in the chancellorship of the exchequer, Mr. Goulburn, who attempted to evade the main question by a succession of pointless jokes, to which "heavy dullness" is prone. Mr. Wakley also attempted the same strain with like effect; and after his speech the debate was again adjourned.

The fourth night's debate was opened by Mr. Milnes, who said that ministers ought to feel every hour as a burthen till they left office. Mr. Rennie and Mr. Wallace spoke in favour of ministers and free trade. Mr. C. Hindley told the house that its refusal of free trade in provisions would rouse the country to demand its reformation. Mr. Villiers made an excellent speech. He produced an immense mass of evidence, furnished from all parts of the kingdom to the ministers who attended the Manchester Conference, of the existing distress, and concluded by saying that if the sufferings of the people continued, if commerce languished, if trade were checked, if the means of employment were compressed, the whole of the responsibility must rest with the right honourable baronet opposite, and he believed that the right honourable baronet had the power of changing the present system, and assured him that according to his determination to support the present system or to change it, would he receive the opposition of the country or its support. Lord Francis Egerton, who owed his election to defective registration, and who afterwards lost it by the correction of the list of electors, instanced his own return as a proof that manufacturing Lancashire did not wish for the commercial changes proposed to be made. Mr. O'Connell followed in a powerful free-trade speech.

And then rose the expectant minister, and in breathless silence the house listened for some indication of the course he intended to pursue. In accordance with Gerard Hamil-

ton's *Parliamentary Logic*, he took advantage of the warmth of Mr. O'Connell, to make a diversion from the main question. He said, however, to the consternation of many of his supporters, that while he preferred a graduated duty he did not pledge himself to support the details of the existing law ; and if the agricultural interest gave him their support on the condition of supporting those details, he was not prepared to accept that support. He had been called upon to develop his plans, because he was supposed to be coming into power ; but he repudiated the absurdity of a public man irrevocably pledging himself to plans, which reconsideration, when in office, might deem it expedient to modify. If he could believe that the alteration of the Corn Laws would cure the lamentable distresses of which they had heard so much, he would recommend to the landowners, for their own sake, to submit to a sacrifice ; and would propose a relaxation, nay, a repeal of the laws. But he did not believe that the Corn Laws were the cause of the great fluctuations in commerce, or of the distresses which they produced.

Lord John Russell followed. He said that Sir Robert Peel had not been called upon to give his detailed plans ; he had merely been asked to state the principles which would guide him. The right honourable baronet would adopt the Reform Act, and all those great measures to which he and his party had been opposed ; but still he resolutely adhered to the sliding scale, which he (Lord John) firmly believed to be the main cause of all the distresses of the country. The sliding scale was a prohibitory duty, destroyed all regularity in commerce, and was injurious to the great body of the people. He admitted that, if, according to Sir R. Peel's supposition, corn rose as high as 90s. or 100s. no duty could be maintained at all ; but he considered that if the field of supply was extended, the less likely was it that a scarcity could occur. The principles of free trade were greatly promoted by such a discussion

as the present. If Sir Robert Peel would give them effect, he might safely despise the menace which had been uttered of overturning any ministry that would act in respect to the Corn Laws as the present ministers had done.

The house divided at half-past two o'clock, on Saturday morning, and the numbers were ;—

For the amendment,..... 360

Against it, ..... 269

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Majority against ministers, ..... 91

On Monday, August 30th, Lord M. Hill appeared at the bar of the House of Commons, and said that her Majesty had been waited upon, pursuant to the resolution of that honourable house, and he was desired by her Majesty to read to the house the following most gracious answer to the address of her faithful Commons :—" It is the greatest satisfaction to me to find that the House of Commons are deeply sensible of the importance of those considerations to which I directed their attention, in reference to the commerce and revenue of the country, and the laws which regulate the trade in corn, and that, in deciding on the course which it may be desirable to pursue, it will be their earnest desire to consult the welfare of all classes of her Majesty's subjects. Ever anxious to listen to the advice of my Parliament, *I will take immediate measures for the formation of a new administraton.*"

At a few minutes past five o'clock, Lord John Russell rose to address the house, which was then extremely crowded, and the most profound silence instantly prevailed. The noble lord, who appeared much affected, and was at times nearly inaudible in the gallery, said :—" I have now, sir, to state to the house, that, after the division on Friday night, her Majesty's ministers have felt it their duty at once to advise the answer which has just been read to the house, and humbly to tender their resignations to her Majesty, and to enable her Majesty to form a new

administration. Her Majesty was graciously pleased to accept their resignations; and we, therefore, now hold office only till other ministers shall be appointed to the offices which we respectively hold. I have only further to say, with regard to those in this house with whom I have conducted public affairs for many years, whether they have been my supporters or my opponents, I wish personally to express a hope, that, in all our future relations, there may be no personal bitterness, and if our resignation tends to the future welfare and prosperity of the country, I shall always look back with satisfaction to this day, in which that event has occurred. I now, sir, move that the house, at its rising, do adjourn to Monday next."

Although some hope had been excited in the minds of free traders by Sir Robert Peel's declaration, that he would not pledge himself to uphold the Corn Laws in their existing details, nor even to prevent their repeal, if the circumstances of the country demanded it, his inclusion amongst his colleagues of the Duke of Wellington, Mr. Goulburn, Lord Ripon, and others opposed to all change, held out little prospect of the adoption of a liberal commercial policy, and the country, not grieving much at the resignation of the whig ministers, looked anxiously and doubtingly upon the probable course of their successors. The Queen experienced a disquietude different from that of her people. Miss Martineau says:—

"On Thursday, September 2nd, her Majesty spent her last evening with the household whom she had declared to be so dear to her. Scarcely a word was spoken at the dinner table; and when she was with her ladies afterwards, tears and regrets broke forth with little restraint. They were natural and amiable. It was no fault of hers, nor of theirs, that their connection was made dependent on the state of political parties. The day after this mournful dining of the Court, when the Queen and her household were about to part—to undergo a separation far more complete than would have been necessary if they had not been at once near relations of the late ministers and her Majesty's domestic companions—the Queen had to go through much painful business. On that Friday morning, September 3rd, crowds thronged



the approaches to Claremont, where the court was staying. It was not like an ordinary change of ministry. The exhaustion of the whigs was so complete, that men knew that a former period of national history was closing, and another coming in: and the crowd was on the watch, that grey autumnal morning, not only for the old ministers and the new, but for every incident, which could be construed into an omen. The old ministers drove up first—in plain clothes—were admitted into the royal presence, and delivered up their seals of office. Meantime the new ministers arrived, in court dresses, and the ‘first sunburst’ occurred as Sir Robert Peel drove in at the gates. He was warmly cheered, as was the Duke of Wellington; and both looked very well pleased, the people said. When the ex-ministers departed, Sir Robert Peel had audience of the Queen, to kiss hands on appointment; and after him the Duke of Wellington and three or four more. Then the Queen and Prince Albert repaired to the corridor, and held a Privy Council, the Queen declaring Lord Wharncliffe its president. The swearing-in of new members was quickly got over—the whole business, with luncheon, occupying only an half-hour. By half-past two, the anxious young Sovereign was left to make domestic acquaintance with her new household, and to miss the familiar friends under whose guidance she had been accustomed to do share of state business. She was probably little aware how soon she could repose entire confidence in her first minister; and feel a new kind of ease about the conduct of public affairs.”

The great object with Sir Robert Peel seemed to be to obtain time for consideration. Some was gained by the adjournment for the re-election of members who had accepted office. The Chancellor of the Exchequer had a vote to meet emergencies; and the powers of the Poor-Law Commissioners, which were about to expire, were renewed for six months, a little to the discomfiture of some of the tories, who had endeavoured to create what the Americans call political capital, by abusing the “Whig” Poor Law. While such business was in progress, Sir Robert cautiously avoided giving any indication of forthcoming measures. The Duke of Wellington, with less discretion, declared that there was no deficiency of food in the country; that the distress had nothing to do with the food question; that it was owing to the want of work and low wages, and



other causes ; and that he had never heard how Parliament could do anything in such a case. Parliament was prorogued on the 7th of October, and the state physician, now regularly called in, obtained some four or five months of time to consider what he would prescribe.

The change of ministry caused no diminution of the zeal with which the anti-corn-law agitation was carried on. Hope, with some, that the Duke and Peel would yield upon an emergency, as they had yielded upon the Catholic question ; indignation with others at the insolent declarations of the Duke of Richmond, and his class ; an old dislike of the Tories, now again in office ; Whiggism roused into action, now that the Whig hitherto *ins* were *out*, and restored to their old functions of opposition,—all tended, not merely to aid the movement, but to give it additional activity. And then, above all, was the intense suffering of the people, most distressing to the humane, and filling the minds of the timid with apprehensions of a dreadful convulsion. After events convince us, that these four months of recess must have been spent by Sir Robert Peel with deep anxiety.

The return of the ministers of the Gospel from their conference at Manchester, gave rise to meetings so numerous that even the names of the places would fill pages ; and new anti-corn-law associations were formed—Birmingham setting the example in this revival. On the 8th of September, a meeting was held in the Manchester Corn Exchange, Mr. Cobden in the chair, at which Mr. Curtis, of Ohio, showed the mutual advantages of free trade between England and the United States. On the 10th of September, a great meeting was held in the Town Hall, Manchester, the mayor, William Nield, Esq., in the chair, in which Mr. Absalom Watkin, the Rev. W. Mc.Kerrow, Sir Thomas Potter, Mr. John Brooks, Mr. W. Rathbone, Mr. R. H. Greg, the Rev. Dr. Beard, the Rev. J. W. Massie, Mr. J. C. Dyer, and Mr. W. Rawson, took effective part,

and at which resolutions were passed, asserting the deep distress of the manufacturing districts occasioned by the Corn Laws, and a petition to the Queen was adopted, praying her Majesty not to prorogue Parliament until such time as that portion of her speech, at its opening, relating to the Corn Laws should be fully deliberated upon. In the borough of Salford and the populous township of Hulme similar demonstrations were made. At this time, also, was the design originated of holding a great Anti-Corn-Law Bazaar, at Manchester, a new kind of agitation, and the precursor of a great Art Exposition, held afterwards in Covent Garden, that probably furnished the idea for the grand Exhibition, which drew together visitors from almost every nation on earth, with the prospect of binding them together in the bonds of peace and amity after the alienating effects of wars, and "orders in council," and Corn Laws.

While in almost every town in Great Britain the people were expressing their opinions in favour of free trade in food, the first number appeared of a very useful series of tracts, written by Mr. Scott, of the firm of Webster, Geary, and Scott, published in London. In 1791, Sir John Sinclair commenced the publication of his "Statistical Account of Scotland," and it was completed in 1796. A new edition was commenced in 1832, and was still in course of publication in 1841. The account of each parish was written by each parochial minister, and the rent of land was given at each period. I had been enabled to make use of some of those statements, to show the great advance in rents in that part of the kingdom, and, by analogy, to judge of the increase in England, but I had not access to the whole of the last edition of the work. Mr. Scott, in his tract, "A Plea for the Total and Immediate Repeal of the Corn Laws," gave a table of the rental of one hundred parishes in Scotland, showing that there had been an increase of more than one hundred and fifty per

cent. in less than fifty years, the total rental of those parishes in the period 1791-1796, being £287,139, and in the latter period, 1832-1840, £744,273. It had been estimated by Sir John, and his estimate was confirmed by many of the parochial clergy, that the rental of estates increased at least from two to three fold from 1660 to 1750. This was doubled previous to 1770, and was again doubled in the next twenty years. Thus the land rental had increased from the period of the Restoration, in 1660, some twenty or thirty fold, or more than two thousand per cent. ! Mr. Scott gave the following instance of the increase of value in particular estates :—“ In 1615, an estate in the parish of Langforgan, Perthshire, was purchased by Lord Strathmore for £2,222 ; in 1777 it was re-sold at £44,000 ; and now the annual rental is more than the purchase money in 1615. Nearly the whole parish of Craig, Forfarshire, was purchased about 1690 for £10,000, and resold about 1782 for £64,000 ; and the present rental is £9,500, which, at twenty-five years’ purchase, would give the value at £237,000. How differently has the much abused fundholder been placed ! Had the £10,000 been invested in the funds, his descendants would, perhaps, have received *six* per cent. until the five per cents. were reduced, and then, if it had been re-invested, less than *four* per cent. would have been the interest returned,—but the descendants of the purchaser of the parish of Craig are now enjoying *ninety-five* per cent., and yet protection to land is demanded.” In a subsequent edition of his useful pamphlet, Mr. Scott exposed the disproportion of the land tax to what it was when originally imposed. In Scotland, that “ exclusive burthen ” is charged upon an official valuation of 1650, and although rents in general had advanced at least twenty fold, the exclusive burthen remained the same. By the return to the “ Statistical Account,” for the parish of Fordun, Kincardineshire, by Dr. Leslie, corrected to 1837, it was shown that while the real rental was

£11,420 at the latter period, it was assessed upon only £594 2s. 1d., the official value at the former, thus paying little more than a *nineteenth part* of what was justly due to the state. Mr. Scott also showed that an estate belonging to the Duke of Richmond, one of the loudest to complain of the exclusive burthens on land, paid only a halfpenny in the pound, or one *forty-eighth part* of what was due to the national revenue. Mr. Jonathan Duncan, in a lecture in favour of entirely free trade and direct taxation, delivered at Ashton-under-Lyne, September 2nd, taking Mr. Scott's estimate of the increase of rents, calculated that if the land tax were levied in the spirit of the constitution, it would produce to the revenue £11,400,000 annually. The League, taking up the subject, published, in 1842, "*The Constitutional Right to a Revision of the Land Tax. Being the Argument on a case submitted to Counsel on behalf of the National Anti-Corn-Law League.*" From that argument the following is an extract:—

"The land was held on certain well-defined conditions, which conditions were, in the strictest sense, the purchase money of that land. That purchase money may be very accurately described to have been made payable as a perpetual annuity to the state, increasing in value as the land increased in value, just as tithe is payable to the parochial clergy, or copyhold profits and other rents to the landholders; with this similarity, as compared with these, that the feudal profits bore a fixed proportion to the annual value at the time the payment became due. But in the year 1660, a body of individuals, who were holders of a considerable portion of the land in question, calling themselves a convention parliament representing the whole nation, voted—at least two more than half of them voted—they should be totally exonerated from the future payment of this perpetual annuity, which was the purchase money of their estates; and that the said annuity or purchase money should, for the future, be paid by other people, who had no share in the land for which they were thus to pay. However, about thirty years after, the parliament laid a tax upon land, which served, when first imposed, as some equivalent for the perpetual and variable annuity, the payment of which had been shifted from the shoulders of the landholders. This tax upon land, which was continued for several successive years, was a tax of four shillings in the pound upon the



actual yearly value of the land at the time of assessing thereof, and was, consequently, like the perpetual and variable annuity of which it may be considered as intended to be the substitute and representative, to increase with the increasing value of land. But, in the year 1697, they contrived to frame the tax (9 Wm. III., c. 10) in such form that it should not be an annuity increasing with, and in proportion to, the increasing value of the land, but *a fixed annuity that should not increase in value*. The consequence of this is, that the said annuity remains at the amount at which it was when the value of a large proportion of the land was only a very small fraction of what it is at present."

On Monday, October 11th, Colonel Thompson, in the course of a tour to some of the large towns, where he expounded the principles of free trade, to large audiences, rendering his speech as effective as his pen had been during his long opposition to the Corn Laws, visited Manchester, and was received in the Corn Exchange at a tea party of the Operative Association, five hundred in number, presided over by Mr. John Brooks. The gallant veteran, in allusion to the interruption of anti-corn-law meetings by the chartists said:—

"The leading principles of popular rights, which the majority of the inhabitants of this country have always been deprived of, were embodied a few years ago, in a document which was named the Charter. I had the honour to be one of ten or twelve members of the House of Commons who were assisting, in conjunction with many most meritorious, able individuals of the working classes, in drawing up that composition. When that was done, there did, as it appeared to me at least, arise another set of men, who said: 'You have drawn up a charter, and the charter is a very good charter, but we are the only men who know anything how it should be gained.' Now, on that, I say there may be two opinions; for I never flinched, nor hesitated in declaring what I thought, and I always maintained, wherever I had opportunity to lift up my voice, and propriety admitted of it, that the great open door for obtaining the charter was to get rid of the restrictions on trade and industry, which make you poor, and of no consequence in the eyes of your enemies. It was because that I loved the charter that I want to see you put down the Corn Laws, as a step towards the obtaining your object. Now, upon that, let there be no quarrel; it is a difference of opinion it is clear, but if we are to quarrel till all difference of opinion is at an end, we shall quarrel till there is an end of the world,



and all that is therein. Might I then propose, if my voice should reach those elsewhere whom it may concern, that we should admit this principle—that *each shall go on his own way, without attempting to hinder the operations of the other.*”

This judicious advice, proceeding from one who was as much an advocate for a thorough reform of the representative system as for perfect freedom of trade, was not without its effect, for it gained over, at least from opposition, the more enlightened of the chartist body, Henry Vincent amongst them, and established a sort of understanding that, while they advocated radical parliamentary reform, they were not to put themselves into an antagonistic position to those who asked for the thorough reform of our commercial policy. On the 18th October, Mr. Vincent gave a lecture on chartism in the Carpenters' Hall, and at its conclusion there was a discussion between him and Mr. Finnigan and Mr. Warren, and it ended in the adoption of a resolution: “That in the opinion of this meeting the charter is just in principle and ought to be contended for; and that the Corn Laws are unjust in principle, oppressive in their operations, and ought to be repealed.”

The manufacturing districts had responded to the recommendation of the League with respect to petitions, and a cart load was sent from Manchester, on Wednesday, October 7th, praying the Queen not to prorogue Parliament till the distresses of her people were taken into consideration. The prorogation had, however, been previously resolved upon, and it actually took place on the Thursday. Her Majesty's ministers had advised her to say that she would receive the complaints of her suffering people through the hands of the Home Secretary; and thus were Earl Radnor, Earl Ducie, Lord Kinnaird, and other patriotic peers, deprived of the opportunity of accompanying the written prayers with a verbal statement of the existing distress. Ministers, in the speech dictated to

her Majesty, acknowledged the existence of distress, but, by the prerogation, they declared that no measures for its relief should be even taken into public consideration till the Houses of Parliament met again in February !

The distress amongst the industrial classes went on deepening day by day. There would have been fearful tumult but for the hope that the labours of the League would lead to some relief. While Sir Robert Peel, in his retreat at Tamworth, was pondering upon the difficulties of his position, the anti-corn-law agitators were preserving the peace. The lecturers, in their various grades of intellect and oratory, were out amongst all conditions of the people—a most efficient police force, the only efficient police force—for soldiers and constables would have been powerless, if the sufferers had despaired, or powerless without a frightful bloodshed. I had the painful task, in penning my “*Historical Sketches of Manchester*,” to record details of the misery endured in the manufacturing districts in 1817-18-19 and 1829; the history bringing vividly to my recollection what I had witnessed in those years of wretchedness; and I feel it too heavy a task now to describe, at any length, the misery which selfish legislation inflicted upon the people in 1841—not to pass away with that year, but to be protracted till the famine becoming unbearable, the legislature at last yielded, and, reluctantly permitted the starving to find their food where it could be found. Let not those who have witnessed such distress be deemed uncharitable, if they do not join in the unbounded praise bestowed upon those who, having inflicted or permitted the infliction, yielded at last.

At the time when Parliament was prorogued, there were 20,936 persons in Leeds, whose average earnings were only elevenpence three-farthings a week. In Paisley, nearly one-fourth of the population was in a state bordering upon actual starvation. In one district, in Manchester, the Rev. Mr. Beardsall visited 258 families, consisting of 1,029 in-

dividuals, whose average earnings were only sevenpence halfpenny per head per week. A public meeting was held in Stockport, October 29th, at which the Rev. Mr. Baker, and Mr. Coppock (the town clerk), gave harrowing details of the wide extent and the intensity of the suffering. While millions were in this deplorable condition, the duty on the importation of wheat was 24s. 8d., on oats 13s. 9d., on barley 10s. 10d., and rye 14s. per quarter. And this was the season at which Sir Robert Peel and his colleagues demanded four months' leisure, at their country abodes, before they could permit Parliament to take the distress of the people into consideration, their excuse being that in all the three years of comparative famine their whig predecessors had devised no remedy. The following letter from Colonel Thompson is descriptive not only of Bolton but of most of the manufacturing towns at the close of this disastrous year:—

“ TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN.

“ Sir,—I have been at the siege of Bolton; for nothing but some such cause suggests itself as adequate to the phenomenon. And is it not a siege? not carried on perhaps by an enemy within gun shot, but by one working on a wider radius, and making his blockade by sea upon the means of life.

“ Many sights it has been my chance to see. I think I know what is the minimum of help by which horse, ass, dog, hog, or monkey can sustain existence, and where it must go out for want of appliances and means of living. But anything like the squalid misery, the slow, moulding, putrefying death by which the weak and the feeble of the working classes are perishing here, it never befel my eyes to behold, nor my imagination to conceive. And the creatures seem to have no idea of resisting, or even repining. They sit down with oriental submission, as if it was God and not the landlords that was laying his hand upon them. And when their honourable representative in Parliament gave description of their sufferings, ‘liar’ was the best word applied to him by the organs of tyranny.

“ Did you ever set eyes on a pennyworth of mutton? Come here and you shall see how rations are served out under the landlord's state of siege. It might bait a rat-trap; though a well fed rat would hardly risk his personalities for such a pittance. Pennyworths of mutton, and

halfpenny worths of bread cut off the loaf, are what the shopkeepers of Bolton deal out to the inhabitants of their Jerusalem. I saw a woman come for one halfpenny worth of bread, which was to be the dinner of herself and children twain; and when I reflected that of this transparent slice the other half was gone to buy the landlord's sack, astonishment possessed me at the endurance of that long-bearing ass the public, and the extent to which ignorance and divisions will prop the rich man's robbery.

"I saw another mother of a family, who said she had not tasted meat for many months; and on one of the children being sent off to the butcher's for some of that strange luxury, she was discovered making many efforts to intercept the messenger. Her anxiety was to instruct the boy to bring back nothing but one pennyworth of bacon; there was a to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow, for which she had conceived the idea of spinning out existence by means of the remainder of the fund.

"If you are curious in human misery, if you are anxious to know what a shabby tyranny can bring the rank and file to suffer, come, at your leasure, to the 'leaguer' of Bolton and see what the people sleep upon, if they do sleep. Chopped dirt, the sweepings of a hen house mingled with a proportion of sparrows' nests, to show that men had heard of straw, would be the best representatives of what they huddle upon in corners, and call it resting. And all this because Sir Having Greedy votes in the House of Commons for closing honest trade, as the means of doubling his rents.

"The minister, meanwhile, and his associates are racking their tender hearts to find a remedy. As in O'Connell's celebrated story of the horse, 'WILL THEY TRY CORN?' They will try anything except allow the sufferers to keep themselves; for that would interfere with the plans of those who, being rich already, use their riches as the means of doubling them by confiscation of the poor man's bread.

"There is danger in these schemes. Already people of all kinds are parodying the sentiment of the Italian's "*AD OGNI NOMO PUZZICA QUESTO BARBARO DOMINIO*," which may be translated for English use, 'Neither man nor woman will endure this dynasty of clodhoppers.' It wants nothing but for the privates of the regiment to know what hurts them, and to get rid (as they are doing fast) of the various false lights thrown out to induce them to run in every direction that will preserve the evil; and a quicker end than pleasant may be put to mischiefs, which nobody would remove by an earlier application of the prudential virtues.—Yours, very sincerely,

"T. PERONETT THOMPSON."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### DELEGATES AT MANCHESTER.

The change of ministers had not daunted the resolution of the League; the prorogation of Parliament, without inquiry into the condition of the people, only strengthened the determination that both houses of the legislature should be compelled to listen to their complaints, and to find a remedy for their sufferings. On Wednesday, the 17th of November, a meeting of one hundred and twenty delegates, from various parts of the kingdom, was held at Manchester, Robert Hyde Greg, Esq., in the chair, to consider the means which should be taken, previous to the re-assembling of Parliament, to promote the repeal of the Corn Laws. Amongst those who attended, in addition to the delegates from the towns in Lancashire, were Colonel Thompson, Mr. Francis Place, Mr. P. A. Taylor, and Mr. James Wilson, from London; Mr. Joseph Sturge and Mr. Wm. Scholefield, from Birmingham; Sir Joshua Walmesley, Mr. Laurence Heyworth, Mr. C. Holland, and Mr. C. E. Rawlins, jun., from Liverpool; Mr. Edward Baines and Mr. Hamer Stansfield, from Leeds: Mr. Dixon (the late mayor) and Mr. Sheffield, from Carlisle. The whole tone of the meeting was encouraging, as giving evidence of unconquerable resolution and of unabated confidence in ultimate success. Besides passing the resolutions subjoined, the meeting entered fully into the arrangements



made by the council of the League for carrying out the agitation during the recess of Parliament; and plans were formed for raising funds for the employment of lecturers, and procuring petitions. One unanimous sentiment prevailed the deliberations—that it was desirable to be fully prepared with the whole of the petitions previously to the meeting of Parliament; and that it was expedient to concentrate the energies of the League as much as possible upon the different modes of agitation which had met the sanction of the delegates. The following resolutions were agreed to unanimously:—

“ That this meeting recommends that petitions for the total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws be presented to the House of Commons, to the utmost possible extent.”

“ That the meeting recommends the calling of district meetings of deputies from the towns engaged in the manufacture of the various staple products, and of other districts conveniently situated for acting together; and that they prepare for publication at such meeting statements of facts bearing upon the state of the population of their respective districts, especially with reference to the condition of the working classes, and the effects of the Corn Laws upon the rate of wages, and upon our foreign and home trade. That such meetings prepare a plan for petitioning the House of Commons for the total and immediate repeal of the Corn Law, from, if possible, every town, village, congregation, and workshop in the district; that they promote the calling of public meetings; and, if practicable, that deputations be sent to communicate with her Majesty’s government upon the state of each trade and district; that the council of the League be requested immediately to correspond with all parts of the country, for the purpose of carrying this resolution into effect; and the members present pledge themselves to aid the movement in their several localities.”

“ That a committee be appointed to carry into effect the plan proposed by Mr. James Wilson, and to determine as to the best mode and time for bringing the same to maturity; and that the information be sent to the Metropolitan Anti-Corn-Law Association, to be digested and prepared for laying before Parliament and government, and for the publication in such manner as may be most calculated to advance the repeal of the Corn Laws, and that the association be referred to on all statistical subjects connected with those laws.”

The deputies met again in the afternoon, when John

Dixon, Esq., of Carlisle, was called to the chair, and the following resolutions were passed :—

“ That the Council of the League be requested to draw up for publication, from authentic sources, the most ample details of the acts of class legislation which have been inflicted on this country by the land-owners.”

“ That this meeting recommends that memorials from the females of the United Kingdom be presented to the Queen, praying her Majesty to exercise her royal prerogative in favour of the immediate and total repeal of the corn and provision taxes.”

“ That all the present anti-corn-law associations be requested to extend and perfect their organization for the purpose of proceeding immediately to get up petitions, and otherwise forwarding the cause of repeal ; and that in the opinion of this meeting, it is very desirable that all petitions should be ready for presentation prior to the assembling of Parliament.”

“ That a meeting of deputies, from all parts of the kingdom, be assembled in London, on or about the commencement of next session of Parliament, of which due notice will be given by the Council of the League.”

“ That, in the opinion of this meeting, the great principle of the total and immediate repeal should be brought forward in the next session of Parliament at the earliest possible period ; the precise time to be decided upon by the general meeting of deputies to assemble in London.”

“ That at this, the earliest meeting of the anti-corn-law associations after the Conference of Ministers to consider the Corn and Provision Laws of the country, the strongest approval of their proceedings be expressed by the gentlemen now assembled ; and that a communication be made to the ministers who attended, and those who concurred in the propriety of that conference, conveying this approval, and entreating them to continue and increase their co-operation for the immediate and total repeal of the Corn Laws.”

These resolutions were passed unanimously. Men not knowing the course of procedure in the business meetings of the League, have expressed astonishment that so much unanimity prevailed, and that Manchester should be the head quarters of the movement from its commencement until its termination. The singleness of the object tended to the first. It was simply to obtain the repeal of the Corn Laws—to have *no* Corn Law, as the title of the various associations declared. Thus there could be no

discussion as to the acceptance of less. The declaration of 1839, that in elections the preference should be given to decided corn-law repealers, irrespective of their party designations, prevented the differences that might have arisen out of party predilections. No part of the funds of the body was spent in elections; the only assistance given anywhere being the enlightenment of the electors on the one great question by speeches or tracts; so that upon that point also conflict of opinion was avoided. That Manchester continued to direct the movement which had originated there, was, because Manchester felt itself purely representative, and constantly consulted its constituents. If the members of the Executive Committee of the Council, who met daily, felt any difficulty in their administrative duties, or had any suggestion to make of wider operations, they called into their deliberations the resident members of the General Council, a numerous body in Manchester; these again, in matters of moment, asked the presence of members from the surrounding towns in Lancashire, North Cheshire, and the West Riding of Yorkshire, whose business brought them once or twice a-week to Manchester; and, when still more important subjects were to be discussed, the council was enlarged by the presence of delegates from all parts of the kingdom. Then there was a strong desire amongst all to merge all minor differences for the promotion of the one great object; and great patience was exercised until every one had an opportunity of giving his opinion. The meetings were not for speech-making, but for consultation. Mr. G. Wilson, the chairman, invited all in succession to say what he thought of the subject under discussion; and thus the strong, practical, sound sense of the most humble and retiring delegate, became a contribution to the mass of thought upon which a final judgment was to be formed.

It was not to be supposed that men could meet so frequently to devise the means of undoing a great legislative

injustice without adverting to the defect of the representative system, to which that injustice could justly be referred. After the conclusion of the business for which the anti-corn-law deputies met at Manchester, and after the chair had been vacated, a meeting was held, Mr. Francis Place, of London, in the chair, to take into consideration a proposal by Mr. Joseph Sturge, of Birmingham, for a movement separate from that against the Corn and Provision Laws, for an extension of the suffrage. It was a strong proof of sympathy with the people, and of respect to Mr. Sturge, that the meeting was attended by nearly all the deputies who had been present till the conclusion of the delegate meeting. Mr. Sturge stated his strong conviction of the necessity of a radical reform, and said that although he had long supposed that a reading and writing qualification, as recommended by Bentham, was the best, he had, since his visit to the United States, been convinced that not only would there be no danger on the adoption of the complete suffrage, but that there was no other effectual means to secure the country from the mischiefs of class legislation. A conversation ensued, in which it was apparent that there was a great desire to promote a movement for thorough reform, provided it could be kept distinct from the operations of the League. It was agreed that Mr. Sturge and Mr. Sharman Crawford, both distinguished for integrity and singleness of purpose, and both enjoying the full confidence of reformers and corn-law repealers, should prepare and sign a declaration, and that it should be sent for signature to some of the leading advocates of free trade throughout the kingdom.

A conference of ministers of religion was opened at Carnarvon, on November 30th, to consider the nature and influence of the Corn Laws, the duties of ministers of the gospel in the then crisis, and to adopt resolutions on the subject. Upwards of forty ministers were present. The sittings of the conference lasted from the morning of



Tuesday until the evening of Thursday. The Rev. J. W. Massie, of Salford, and Colonel P. Thompson attended as representatives of the National Anti-Corn-Law League. The proceedings of the conference were distinguished throughout by talent, fervour, and unanimity. The first resolution adopted by the conference affirmed the duty of ministers to denounce, as publicly and effectually as possible, every measure injurious to the morals of the community and to the physical condition of the people. The third resolution adopted declared the convictions of the conference to be, that a meeting of Christian ministers of any particular district, without reference to denomination or sect, appeared to be the most expedient and effective means of bringing the dictates of the gospel to bear, publicly, upon the public evils. The next resolution adopted was to the effect that the existing Corn Law was a public evil, and essentially adverse to the plainest injunctions of Holy Writ, opposed to the moral and physical welfare of the people, and injurious to the religious interests of the whole community. In the memorial addressed to her Majesty, the conference said :--

“ We are surrounded by, and, in the discharge of our avocations, come into daily contact with, multitudes who depend on industry for their honest maintenance ; we witness their struggles, and sympathize with them in their sorrows and privations. But though language be inadequate to describe the scenes of heart-rending, wide-spread, and, ever-deepening distress with which our duty makes us painfully familiar, we are constrained to attempt to convey to your gracious Majesty intelligence of the fact, that thousands of your loyal industrious subjects are in destitution, to a very great extent, of the common necessities of life ; and, besides the prevalence of fevers and other diseases, suffer many of the consequences of famine in a land of plenty. We venture, respectfully, but confidently to trace these miseries to inadequate employment and low wages, which are not merely incidental to fluctuations in trade, but are the legitimate and necessary effects of laws which produce artificial scarcity and enhance the price of bread ; and, preventing the increase of labour and commerce, lessen the remuneration of industry.”

On Wednesday, December 8th, a great convocation of



manufacturers of Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, and Derbyshire, was held in the Lancasterian School, Derby, John Hinde, Esq., the most extensive manufacturer in the three counties, in the chair. The room, which was capable of holding upwards of a thousand persons, was crowded to excess. The details, read to the meeting by numerous deputies, of the distressed condition of the people in these midland manufacturing counties were heart-rending. The greatest unanimity prevailed, and the most determined resolution was shown to use unrelaxing efforts to remove the great cause of the existing misery. The resolutions were proposed and supported by Mr. W. Biggs, of Leicester; Mr. G. Johnson, of Derby; Mr. Wakefield, and Mr. Cripps, of Nottingham; and Mr. Hancock and Mr. Strutt, of Belper. Amongst the gentlemen assembled were, Sir John Easthope, M.P. for Leicester; Sir G. Larpent, M.P. for Nottingham; E. Strutt, M.P. for Derby; W. Evans, M.P. for North Derbyshire; Richard Cobden, M.P. for Stockport; Dr. Bowring, M.P. for Bolton; Edward Baines, of Leeds; and William Rawson, of Manchester. At four o'clock, a dinner was provided in the large room of the Royal Hotel, to which about three hundred gentlemen sat down. The chair was filled by E. Strutt, Esq., M.P. who was supported by Sir George Larpent, Sir John Easthope, and the other members of Parliament. After the usual loyal toasts, the chairman called on Mr. Cobden, who was received with loud and prolonged applause. With his usual business tact, he applied himself at once to the effect of the Corn Laws on that particular locality, and said:—

“Allow me to say that listening to the details which you have given to-day, going back for a period of five and twenty years, showing a constant depression in the condition of the people, and a decline in your own immediate interests, I could not help thinking—pardon me for saying so—that the agitation against the Corn and Provision Law should have begun long long ago, in the midland counties. Why, gentlemen, you have the whole of the case in your own hands. We, in Lan-

cashire, fight under a disadvantage; we are told, when we call for a repeal of the corn and provision monopoly, that our distress arises from improvement in machinery. But this does not apply to your case; for I am told that the stocking frame has remained nearly the same as when it issued from the hands of the inventors, two centuries ago: at all events I believe that within the last five and twenty years, no material alterations have taken place in the machine; and there are no steam engines with tall chimneys planted here, giving motion to the power loom instead of the stocking frame. Then we are met in Manchester again with the cry that over-production is the cause of all the distress. But I have heard to-day that your production is declining, that the number of frames in motion is diminishing, instead of increasing, especially in Leicestershire. It is, therefore, not over-production, it is not machinery that is doing the mischief for you. But what do you hear also in Lancashire? That joint-stock banks have produced all the distress. But here, I find, that no great mischief has been produced by joint-stock banks. You, therefore, have the case in your own hands. The whole of the fallacies of our opponents, as applied to Manchester, are answered in your case; and I say that with such a case in your hands, and with such claims on the part of your dependants, henceforth it becomes the province of the midland counties to take up the question, to lead onward in the van, and to be the champions for the total and immediate repeal of the Corn Laws. I am glad, gentlemen, that on this occasion you have directed so much of your inquiry to the subject of wages, as affecting the largest and most important part of the population of these counties. I am glad that you have not contented yourselves with a relation of the decrease of the profits of the employer, or the decline of business, but have given us such a clear statement of the fall of wages in your counties; and I take it as the strongest argument which you could furnish for the House of Commons in the coming session; I take it as the most powerful argument which you could put into the hands of members of Parliament, to justify the plea which we have set up, to justify the toast which I am going to read to you:—‘The total and immediate repeal of the Corn and Provision Laws;’ and I could not help thinking, as I listened to the details of those diminished comforts and exhausted means of the working classes of this district—I could not help thinking, as I heard of the constantly diminishing resources, for the last five and twenty years, of the industrious frame-work knitters of these counties—that our legislature had indeed departed from the spirit of that book, which was so well alluded to by the gentleman who said grace after dinner—that they had forgotten the poor and needy, had forgotten those who of all others need protection, and were busy protecting those who ought to have been engaged

in protecting others. Where is the protection of the frame-work knitters? When he needs protection most—when the high price of food renders it most difficult for him to support his family—have we heard to-day that the Corn Laws are a protection to him? No; we have heard that just in proportion as the Corn Law effects its object for those who gain by it, just in the same proportion does it minister to the misery and degradation of the working classes of this district.”

Mr. Cobden proceeded to advert to the “exclusive burthens,” which landlords pleaded as a reason for protection and very rapidly demolished their fallacies, and compared the heavy burthens laid upon land in other countries with their light pressure in England; he said,—

“Sir Robert Peel (and I thank him for it) has directed attention to another point of landlord agitation; and when I look into the question of the land tax, from its origin to the present time, I am bound to exclaim that it exhibits an instance of selfish legislation, secondary only in audacity to the Corn Law and provision monopolies. Would you, gentlemen, who have not looked into the subject—but go home and study it, I entreat you,—would you believe that the land tax, in its origin, was nothing but a commutation rent charge, to be paid to the state by the landowners, in consideration of the crown giving up all the feudal tenures and services by which they held their land. Yes, exactly 149 years ago, when the landed aristocracy got possession of the throne in the person of King William, at our *glorious* revolution they got rid of all the old feudal tenures and services, such as the crown having the right of wardship over every minor, the fines payable on the descent of certain property from one person to another, and a thousand other similar incumbrances, which yielded the whole revenue of the state; and besides which the land had to find soldiers and maintain them. These incumbrances were given up for a *bona fide* rent-charge upon the land of four shillings in the pound; and the land was valued and assessed 149 years ago, at nine millions a year; and upon that valuation the land tax is still laid.—(Hear.) Now, you gentlemen of the middle classes, whose windows are counted, and who have a schedule sent to you every year, in which you are required to state the number of your dogs and horses; and you who have not window and dog duty to pay, but who consume sugar and coffee and tea, and pay a tax for every pound you consume extra—I say to you remember that the landowners have never had their land revalued from 1696 to the present time.—(Hear, hear.) Yes, the landowners are now paying upon a valuation made just 149 years ago. The collector who comes to you to count the

apertures through which heaven's light enters your dwellings, who leaves you a schedule in which to enter your dogs, horses, and carriages, passes over the landowner, leaves no schedule there in which to enter the last year's rent roll, under certain penalties; but he takes out his old valuation, dated 1696, and gives the landowners a receipt in full, dated 1841, upon the valuation made a century and a half ago! I say we are indebted to Sir Robert Peel for calling our attention to this subject. I exhort the middle classes to look to it. It is a war on the pockets that is carrying on; and I hope soon to see societies formed calling upon the legislature to revalue the land; and put a taxation upon it in proportion to that of other countries, and in proportion to the wants of the state."

The company was subsequently addressed by the Rev. Mr. Berry, of Leicester, Dr. Bowring, M.P., Mr. Evans, M.P., Sir John Easthope, M.P., and Sir George Larpent, M.P. I find in my paper, close to the report of the proceedings of this midland gathering, the following verses by Dr. Bowring, embodying in poetic form the feelings of millions at the close of this year of wretchedness—to be followed by one of still more deplorable misery:—

"DIED OF STARVATION"—CORONERS' INQUESTS.

"I met Famine on my way,  
 Prowling for human prey,  
 Clogg'd with filth, and clad in rags,  
 Ugliest of all ugly hags.  
 Lo! a sceptre wreathed with snakes  
 In her wither'd hand she shakes;  
 And I heard the hag proclaim—  
 ' *Bread Tax*, is my sceptre's name!  
 On remorseless mission sent,  
 Maiming, murdering as she went,  
 Spreading death from street to street,  
 O! I heard the hag repeat,  
 (Shuddering while I heard and saw,)  
 ' Mine is RIGHT and MIGHT and LAW;'  
 Then to solitude I flew—  
 ' Gracious Heaven can this be true ?'  
 On my trembling knees I fell:  
 ' God ! thou God of mercy tell,  
 Can the very fiends of hell

In thy name their pandects draw,  
And declare their license—*law* ?  
Dare they in thy holy sight  
To proclaim their robbery—*right* ?  
Rouse thee ! raise thine awful rod !  
Lord how long, how long, O God ? ”

The ladies of Manchester, in their appropriate work of charity, were now advancing rapidly in their preparations for the great Bazaar, and exerting themselves in enlisting the sympathies of the women of England, on behalf of the suffering poor. In the beginning of December, their committee numbered nearly two hundred, among whom were most of the ladies who had distinguished themselves in works of charity and philanthropy in their neighbourhood, and also in distant parts of the country, including also many whose benevolence had induced them to take an active part in the anti slavery movement. Their committee having invited Mr. George Thompson to deliver a lecture on the effects of the Corn Laws, with a view of assisting their movement for a numerously-signed memorial to the Queen, that gentleman, on the morning of the last day of November, addressed a crowded meeting of ladies and gentlemen, in the Corn Exchange, Holland Hoole, Esq., in the chair, on the state of the country, the artificial price of corn, the alleged dependence on foreign countries, the nature of the Corn Law, the injustice of the landowners' protection, the abundance in America, the duty of Christian women, the benefit of female exertions, and the propriety of a memorial to the Queen. Mr. Thompson was followed by Mr. Alderman Callender, Mr. Thomas Bazley, and Mr. Henry Ashworth, of Bolton. As he could not embrace the whole subject in one lecture, a second was delivered to a still more numerous audience, the benevolent and energetic Mr. John Brooks taking the chair on the occasion. Mr. Thompson continued his subject in a speech of great eloquence and great power ; and,



at its conclusion, urging an appeal to the Queen. he said :

“ She is a woman—she is a wife—she is a mother ; tell her the nation which has just rejoiced in the birth of a son she has given to be the sovereign of these realms, contains millions of husbands, wives, and children, who know not where to obtain to-morrow’s bread.—(Hear.) Implore her, as she desires to save her country from distraction, to gladden homes that are desolate, to bring upon her the blessings of the perishing, and to rule over a happy and contented people,—to exercise all the influence the constitution gives her in favour of that great measure which we have advocated to-night. Let the memorial which shall thus express your own wishes be carried to the homes of those for whose welfare it prays. Carry it to the cellar where mothers are perishing;—ascend from the cellar to the garret ; gather as you go, the signatures of those who are pining for bread. Thus let those who have nothing, and those who at present enjoy competence, appear together in the presence of our patriot Queen.—(Cheers.) If it be possible let millions of women urge their united appeal to a woman’s heart ; it cannot be that it shall prove a vain appeal. Your Queen has told you that she pities the sufferings of her people, and desires to relieve them.—(Hear, hear.) Consolidate these sufferings ; present them in the mass before her eyes ; claim her attention to them ; tell her that the Corn Laws have produced them ; tell her that nothing but the abolition of the Corn Laws can remove them ; and beseech her with the earnestness which women alone can display, to declare herself yet again on the side of the people. If in the midst of this work of mercy any should cry ‘ politics,’ silence it with the still louder cry of ‘ bread !’—(Great cheering.) If any should tell you, you are unfeminine in that which you do, tell them it would be still more unlike women to slumber in inactivity when mothers and their little ones are perishing for bread.—(Cheers) Do this, and you will sanctify this question ; you will raise it above the reach and make it triumph over the machinations of party ; you will teach a lesson to heartless politicians which they may not refuse to learn. While the voice of the advocates of the poor is heard in the senate of the land, let your voice be heard in the palace of your Queen.—(Cheers.) I firmly believe it remains for you to give your casting vote in favour of the abolition of the Corn Laws. Refuse it not, I entreat you !—give it to-night ; call upon your sisters throughout the country to give it ; let every woman in Manchester and its suburbs have the opportunity of giving it. Be prompt in what you do. It is a life and death question. Hunger waits not ! Death waits not ! Both are abroad ; be up and doing. This is the time : the hour is striking. To your work then—your proper work ; the work of women—of Englishwomen—of English

Christian women. What you do, do with your might; do it in the name of perishing humanity; do it in the name of Him who, though he was rich, for your sakes became poor. And He shall reward you. He shall acknowledge what you do as done unto himself. And, when on the pillow of death you review the transactions of life, this act of mercy shall smooth your passage to the grave; and your noblest epitaph shall be—that you sought to deliver the poor that cried; while the eulogium that divine lip shall utter shall be this—“She hath done what she could!”

The ladies had not only been told that their work of benevolence was “unfeminine,” but the unmanly attempt was made to cast foul slander on their characters; and was persevered in on the part of one influential journal until the proprietor was told, in a manner which he could not misunderstand, that unless he gave orders to his underlings to desist, he would be made personally responsible for their calumnies. The virulent abuse then took another and safer direction. The *Standard* said that “England would be as great and powerful, and all useful Englishmen would be as rich as they are, though one ruin should engulph all the manufacturing towns and districts of Great Britain,” and asked, “Is there a millowner who would not compound for the utter destruction of all the manufacturing industry of Great Britain at five years’ end, upon condition that during that period he should have full and profitable employment for all his mills, and all his capital, reinforced by all the credit he could obtain? And it may be confidently answered NOT ONE.” The play was to represent the question as one, not to give bread and work to millions of half-starved and half-employed workmen, but to give profit to a few rich capitalists—to divert the agitation directed against selfish monopolists into one against employers,—and it was successful to a certain extent, as we shall see in the history of the succeeding year. The *Times* adopted the language of the physical chartists, and conferred upon capitalists the nicknames of “mill-molochs” and “millocrats.” The *Herald*

and the *Post* never mentioned the manufacturing population but in terms of contempt, and the latter said: "While the people of all ranks, or all degrees of property, in the crowded manufacturing districts are what they are, it is a moral impossibility that they should be tranquil, or wise, or happy." It was a moral impossibility that men who were reduced to starvation by selfish legislation could be tranquil, wise, and happy—if they complained of the injustice! Language of this sort was repeated over every part of the kingdom, especially in the manufacturing districts, and the obvious design was to involve the working classes in serious disputes with their masters. The design was zealously forwarded by the O'Connor chartists, and the mischievous effects were speedily manifested.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE CAMPAIGN OF 1842.

On the first day of January, 1842, a meeting was held in the League rooms, Manchester, consisting of working men, deputies from Manchester, Salford, Birmingham, Forfar, Ashton, Bury, Bolton, Warrington, Leicester, Stalybridge, Halifax, Macclesfield, Nottingham, Coventry, Oldham, Liverpool, Royton, Waterhead Mill, Middleton, Mossley, Stockport, Great Torrington (Devonshire), &c. Seldom had there been seen a body of more intelligent men. Mr. E. Watkins was called to the chair. Reports of the state of the working people, and of trade, in the various districts represented, were read by the respective deputies. Many spirit-stirring speeches were delivered during the day; and an excellent address to their fellow-workmen was agreed to, urging them to promote, by every means in their power, the great object of the League, to destroy the great monopoly which stood in the way of the removal of all other monopolies, and especially the monopoly of political power.

A public meeting of the members of the Dundee Anti-Corn-Law Association, and deputies from the various anti-corn-law and free-trade associations in Forfarshire, Fifeshire, and the neighbouring counties connected with the flax and linen trade, was held in Bell-street Chapel, Dundee, on the 6th of January, for the purpose of diffusing

information relative to the distressed state of trade, and the baneful effects of the Corn and Provision Laws on the condition of the people, and to memorialise her Majesty, and petition Parliament for the total repeal of these laws, and other restrictions on commerce. Edward Baxter, Esq., president of the Dundee Anti-Corn-Law Association, took the chair, and Messrs. Low and Wighton were appointed joint clerks. The platform was crowded. Amongst others were noticed about fifty deputies from the towns and villages of Forfarshire, Fifeshire, and Perthshire; comprising a number of magistrates, merchants, manufacturers, and tradesmen, the greater part of whom were connected more or less with the linen trade in their respective districts. The speakers, during the day, were Sir John Ogilby; D. Baxter, Esq.; T. Saunders, Esq.; Mr. Landale, of Kirkaldy; Mr. Jas. Inglis, of Dumfermline; Mr. Kinloch, of Kinloch; Mr. W. F. L. Carnegie, of Baysack; Mr. Canning, of Arbroath; Mr. J. G. Stuart; Mr. Angus, of Kirriemuir; Mr. Lamb, of Brechin; Mr. J. Baxter, of Blairgowrie; Mr. W. Nairn, of Logiealmond; Mr. A. D. Young, Mr. Butchart, Mr. Low, and Mr. Paton, of Bankfoot. The statements presented by the various deputies exhibited a mournful picture of commercial embarrassment, of manufacturing distress, and social misery. Bad as was the foreign trade, it appeared from the report of this conference that the home trade, as in all the other branches of our manufactures, was in an equally depressed state; contradiction strong to the flimsy fallacy, that the bread tax was necessary for the preservation of the home market. On the subject of "protection," the meeting wisely passed the following resolutions: "That, while this meeting claims as a natural and inherent right, the privilege of exchanging the productions of their industry freely for the corn and provisions of other nations, they are willing that the so-called protection enjoyed by the linen trade of this country should be at the same time



abolished; and the just and peaceful principles of free trade applied to the productions of this and every other country." It was most gratifying to observe, that during the greater part of the lengthened sederunt (nearly six hours) the attendance was numerous and respectable—the most of the principal merchants, manufacturers, and tradesmen of the district being present. The day's proceedings were not only free from all interruption, but passed off in the most cordial and satisfactory manner.

On Thursday, January 6th, a meeting of the Woollen Manufacturers of the counties of Somerset, Wilts, and Gloucester, called by circular, took place at the White Hart Hotel. The meeting was numerously attended, and among those present was Colonel Gore Langton, M.P., notwithstanding his being an invalid. Charles Staunton, Esq., M.P., for Stroud, was also present, on whose motion J. L. Philips, Esq., of Melksham, was called to take the chair. The chairman having explained the objects of the meeting to be, to take into consideration the present state of the manufacturing interest in the West of England, and the great distress consequent on the depression attributable to the operation of the Corn Laws, the first resolution was moved by Mr. Edmunds, of Bradford, who gave an appalling picture of the state of trade in that town, and a detail of facts as to the great decrease of manufactures. From 1820 to 1840 the number of woollen goods made in a given year had decreased from 620 ends to 100. Of 19 mills, in 1820, only two remained employed in 1840. House property had consequently been reduced in value more than 15 per cent., and the poor rates and pauperism increased in a proportionate ratio. Mr. Merlin, of Stroud, in seconding the resolution, gave a similar statement of facts relating to that district, where the number of mills in employ since the year 1831 had been reduced from 100 to 63, of which some were not now half employed, others not above one-third, and very few wholly so. The motion

having been supported by Mr. Matravers, of Westbury, who also described the trade of that place as being at a very low ebb ; it was carried unanimously. The next resolution was moved by Mr. Overbury, of Westbury, in an argumentative and effective speech of some length, showing the evil effects of the prohibitory duties on corn and other food. The resolution was seconded by Charles Staunton, Esq., and on being put by the chairman, only two hands were held up against it. The third resolution was moved by Mr. Charles Cooper, who repudiated political motives as inducing him to attend the meeting, and pleaded the repeal of the Corn Laws on grounds of humanity and christian principle. Mr. Salter, of Trowbridge, seconded the resolution, and spoke to the deplorable state of the trade and manufacturing interests in that town. Mr. Stancombe, moved the fourth resolution, corroborating Mr. Salter's statement, which was seconded by Mr. Wood, of Frome. It was stated by the chairman that the next resolution related to the adoption of a petition to both houses of Parliament, founded on the foregoing resolutions. On this Mr. J. H. Webb, of Trowbridge, rose to move an amendment as a rider to the petition, the purport of which was, that the meeting in seeking legislative measures in favour of the manufacturing interests, sought nothing that might be incompatible with a due regard to the claims of the landowners to protection. It was seconded by Mr. Ghee, with a few observations in defence of the plan recently broached by Mr. Christopher, as the ministerial organ ; which called forth some spirited arguments from Mr. Staunton, on the fallacy of some of Mr. Christopher's opinions, quoted by the seconder. The amendment was put and lost, only three hands being held up in its favour ; while the original motion, having been moved and seconded, was carried almost unanimously. The petition was then signed by the chairman, and afterwards by most of the meeting.

Almost simultaneous with this movement of the south-western counties of England, was one of much importance in Scotland. On the 11th of January, a conference, or synod, or convocation, was held in Edinburgh, consisting of ministers of the gospel, deputed by their congregations, each accompanied by two laymen. The ministers of the Established Kirk of Scotland had not been invited, for it was not to be expected that men whose stipends varied with the price of corn would join in an agitation to reduce their own incomes. The Free Kirk was not then in existence, but things were drifting onwards towards the great disruption, and the more independent members of the establishment were too deeply engrossed with their own ecclesiastic affairs to take much part in the anti-corn-law agitation. To the ministers of the Secession, Relief, Independent, and Baptist Churches, 670 circulars were sent, and 494 answers were received. It appeared that 459 of these ministers expressed decided opinions in favour of the total repeal of the Corn and Provision Laws, and the establishment of an entirely free trade in corn; about twelve were in favour of a small fixed duty, or gradual abolition; and the remaining thirty-three did not answer to the question. It was not a little remarkable that *not one member out of the 494 expressed an opinion in favour of the existing Corn Laws.* With regard to the opinions of the people, 431 of the ministers stated that their congregations were nearly unanimous in approving of the total abolition of the Corn and Provision Laws, and Free Trade; and only *three* stated that the people were *not* nearly unanimous. Of the remaining sixty, about fifteen stated that their people were either in favour of gradual abolition or a fixed duty; and the others omitted to answer the question. *Not one minister stated that a majority of his congregation approved of these laws.*

The chairman, the much respected John Wigham, jun., a member of the Society of Friends, disposed of the sliding

scale very pointedly : "I am sick of sliding scales, and all scales. There is a man of the name of Smith who has been robbing the country of bills to the amount of some £500,000 in the course of five years,—would you receive a proposition from him to the effect, that, as the way in which he has been accustomed to live is expensive, you must not think of reducing his income all at once—that he will be satisfied with a fixed income at the rate of £100,000 in five years for the future? (Cheers and laughter.) If these laws are what I have described them to be,—as honest men, as Christians, we can enter into no compromise. We demand complete justice—we can give our consent to nothing short of this."

The Rev. Mr. Marshall, of Coupar-Angus, the Rev. James R. M'Gavin, of Dundee, the Rev. Mr. Lowe, of Forfar, and the Rev. J. Kennedy, of Aberdeen, argued the religious and moral bearings of the question with great ability. The latter, in recommending union amongst the friends of humanity and civil liberty, said : "I would say to the chartist (and I trust, sir, it will not be considered treason to mention this word in this meeting), I would say to the chartist: Go on, nor rest till you have gained your object—till the suffrage is as universal as the present suffering, with the exception of the crime it has produced—(hear, hear)—and, as time rolls, you will find the friends of your cause increase, as a conviction of its justice breaks in upon the mind. But, oh, I would beg of the chartist, by the humanity that beats in his bosom, by the tide of parental affection that flows through his heart, not to protract his own and his family's sufferings by withholding his aid from the present vigorous movement which is now in progress, for bread to the hungry and prosperity to our languishing country. (Cheers.) Union in this may bring about union in other things; and, if this is accomplished, the scorpion sting is extracted from oppression, and the smile of prosperity will begin to gladden the land."



Mr. Dawson, editor of the *Kelso Chronicle*, gave some painful details of the suffering which was experienced in the agricultural districts represented by him, and assured the meeting that the farmers, although they were kept silent by the aristocratic landlords, were fully alive to the mischiefs inflicted by the Corn Law, and of its uselessness in the way of protection to them. He mentioned one individual, a relative of his own, who, paying a rental of from £200 to £300 a-year for land on the banks of the Tweed, not only entertained those views, but was of opinion that, under present leases, it would be for the general advantage of the farmers that the trade in corn were freed from the unnatural shackles by which it was beset.

But the most important testimony to the enlightened opinions of the Scottish tenantry was borne by Mr. William Hope, an East-Lothian farmer, who declared that as a grower of grain, a feeder of sheep and oxen, he wished to proclaim to the public, that he had no reason to fear for the ruin of his order from the pale-faced working classes of our manufacturing towns being permitted their just right to exchange the produce of their industry for food raised in foreign lands. He proceeded to show that low prices of corn would have no effect in throwing out of cultivation large tracts of land, and thus bring ruin, by depriving of employment both farmers and ploughmen, as had often been asserted by the advocates of the present law. He said :—

“ Of all the arguments I ever heard urged against the repeal of the bread tax, this has always appeared to me the most futile. I ask, is there danger of any of the land running away? Surely not. And if at present, the produce is sufficient to give food for the labourer, and leave a surplus to the landlord, what is to prevent it doing so, even if the nominal money value of the produce should be lowered? In the county of East Lothian, where I reside and farm, a great deal of the land is only once grass in the six years, and this is a rotation requiring a larger expenditure in money and labour than if the grass were allowed to remain for



more than one year. What do you think may be the actual outlay per acre in money in carrying on the necessary operations of an average farm, irrespective of the price of grain? Why, not half a guinea per imperial acre; all other charges and expenses being regulated entirely and immediately by the prices of grain. The landlord is paid his rent generally in wheat. The labourers receive the bulk of their wages in the produce of the farm, grass for their cows, and specified quantities of the different kinds of grain. And it can make no difference to the farmer what may be the nominal value of the hay and oats raised by himself, and consumed by his horses and cattle. There are, it is true, the tolls and expenses in taking farm produce to market, some money wages to labourers, the accounts of the smith, the wright, and the saddler, besides the women and boys for hoeing and weeding, harvest wages, grass seeds, statute labour, and a trifling poor-rate. This is a goodly list; but I say, take all these items together, they do not, for ordinary management, exceed 10s. 6d. per imperial acre; and many of them would be materially modified, were any permanent change to take place in the price of food. I think I have said enough to prove that high prices are not so very necessary to the farmer as some are apt to imagine. (Cheers.) But I tell you more, that in 1836, *when wheat was selling at 36s. per quarter, we did well*; but that since then, in 1839, for example, with wheat at 72s. per quarter, just double what it was in 1836, farmers in East Lothian, myself amongst them, *actually lost money*. We did not grow grain sufficient for our rents and expenses; the additional quantity wanted must be made up; the higher the price the worse for the tenant. So much for the benefit of high prices to us tenant-farmers, who pay corn-law rents. *Steady markets are of more importance to us than high prices with violent fluctuations*; but which will never be obtained till the market of Britain is thrown open to the world. Evidence was given before the Parliamentary committee of 1836, that the English farmers could not raise grain at the then prices which we in Scotland could do. But how could they not? *From the almost universal want of leases, an effectual damper is put upon all attempts at improved management, for fear of additional rent*. Amongst some of their antiquated practices, they still use the flail—that first remove from the patriarchal method of treading out corn with oxen, in place of the steam or even horse thrashing machine, which, by doing it so much cheaper, making the grain of better quality by superior condition, and by separating the grain more perfectly from the straw, would make the difference in the rent of a moderate-sized farm of at least 5s. per acre. The landowners there may, for aught I care, do what they like with their own; but I affirm they have no right to complain, where, exposed to the bracing and healthful breeze of free competition, when, by thus re-

fusing leases and preventing the improvement of the soil, they show themselves so regardless of the people—practically saying, that no more inhabitants shall dwell in this kingdom than we choose to raise food for; compelling emigration of both capital and labour, which would otherwise have borne their share of the burdens of the country, thus crippling the resources of the nation; for what constitutes the strength of a country, but a numerous and well-fed population?"

An important demonstration in Glasgow followed closely upon the one which had been made in Edinburgh. It was held on Friday, January 14th, and was attended by deputies from most of the manufacturing towns in Scotland. At the morning's meeting, presided over by Walter Buchannan, Esq., evidence was given of the existence of extreme distress in Paisley, where, out of one hundred shawl manufacturers, seventy-six had become bankrupt within the previous month; in Aberdeen, where there had been a great decrease of employment and a corresponding increase of pauperism; and in Kerriemuir, Auchtermuchty, Linlithgow, Maybole, Kilmarnock, Mauchline, Stranraer, Kilsyth, Salteoats, Cumnock, Largs, Duntocher, Kilwinning, &c., where the distress was equally severe. A great meeting was held in the City Hall in the evening, consisting of nearly two thousand persons, all seated at refreshment tables. The chair was taken by James Oswald, Esq., M.P. for the city, supported by the Rev. Dr. Wardlaw, Mr. Ewart, M.P., Mr. Dennistoun, M.P., Mr. Fox Maule, M.P., Mr. Rutherford, M.P., Mr. Spiers, M.P., Mr. Wallace, M.P., and the Rev. Dr. Heugh. The Rev. Dr. Wardlaw asked a blessing on the banquet and the proceedings. Mr. Ewart, M.P., proposed the first toast, which was, "The total and immediate repeal of the Corn Law." The Glasgow Association had resolved that this should be given as a test of opinion, as in that city many persons interested, or supposing themselves to be interested, in the preservation of the West India monopoly, were not disposed to go the length of the entire abolition of the great landowners' exaction; while others were

warmly attached to whiggism as associated with its former services to liberty, and therefore, looked favourably on the scheme of a moderate fixed duty, for which the late whig ministers would contend. The enthusiastic plaudits which burst forth on the enunciation of the out-and-out free-trade toast at once proved that the vast assemblage, comprising the most influential merchants and manufacturers of the district, were against any compromise of the great principle. Mr. Ewart was followed by Mr. Fox Maule, Mr. Rutherford, Mr. Spiers, Dr. Wardlaw, Dr. Heugh, and Mr. Patrick Brewster, the only minister of the establishment who ventured to be present. On the following evening, a *soirée*, attended by sixteen hundred persons, served still further to strengthen the movement in the west of Scotland.

At this period the whole of the island from Cornwall to Caithness was in commotion. To give even a sketch of the meetings held would fill a volume. I notice only those which represented the opinions of districts. Of these was an important one at Birmingham, on January 27th, consisting of the principal merchants and manufacturers of that town, now thoroughly roused by the evidence of deep distress spread all around them, and of deputies from the populous towns in that neighbourhood, amongst whom were the following gentlemen:—From Wolverhampton: Mr. J. Walker, Mr. J. Wynn, and Mr. Walton; from Coventry: Mr. W. Edgar and Mr. T. Latham, with deputies from the Young Men's Anti-Monopoly Association, and the Anti-Corn-Law Association of that ancient city; from Dudley: Mr. Cook; from Kidderminster: Mr. Dodswell; from West Bromwich: Messrs. Boyle, Brettell, Murray, J. Smith and J. Dark; from Bilston: Messrs. Lovell, Dimmock, and Blew; from Walsall: Rev. Mr. M'Kean and Mr. J. Spicer; from Stourbridge: Mr. Scott, M.P. and Rev. Mr. Richards; from Coalbrookdale: Mr. Abrahams. There were also deputies from Darlaston and other places

in the neighbourhood. The details of distress were similar to those which had been given at the meetings in the mid-land counties, in the south-western counties, in Yorkshire, in Lancashire, in Perthshire, and in Lanarkshire ; and at the ministerial conferences in Manchester, Carnarvon, and Edinburgh. The following gentlemen were appointed as a deputation to wait on her Majesty's ministers, to lay before them a statement of the effects of the Corn Laws on the trade of the district : Messrs. J. Sholefield, M.P., G. F. Muntz, M.P., T. Thornely, M.P., C. P. Villiers, M.P., R. Scott, M.P., Joseph Sturge, Josh. Walker, W. Boulton, Corbett, Taunton, and the chairman. The following resolution, passed unanimously, proved that the meeting was strongly adverse to any compromise: "That this meeting rejoices that the National Anti-Corn-Law League have convened a meeting of deputies, to be held in London on the 8th of February, and earnestly recommends to the deputies, then assembled, to take prompt and efficient measures, irrespective of the course which may be pursued by the government, for testing the opinions of the members of the House of Commons on the total and immediate abolition of the Corn and Provision Laws."

The design of a bazaar, upon a grand scale, so as to add largely to the funds of the League, and to bring into friendly communication, and daily social intercourse, the friends of free trade, and especially the ladies who had taken a deep interest in the question as affecting the welfare of suffering millions, had been first broached in September 1841, when a committee was appointed to consider how it could be carried out. On the 4th November the ladies, forming the committee, met in the Town Hall, where they received deputations from the Anti-Corn-Law and the Anti-Monopoly Associations. Mr. George Wilson stated that a correspondence had been opened with various large towns in the kingdom, with the view of making the Bazaar a national one ; that promises of active support and



patronage had been received from every quarter ; and that in addition to the ordinary articles of dress, ornament and vertu, which composed merchandize of bazaars generally, they should collect articles of manufactures, British and foreign, models of mechanism, architectural designs, paintings and drawings, specimens of coins, minerals, birds, insects, and shells, manuscripts of celebrated authors, autograph letters of celebrated persons, philosophical instruments, &c. Mr. Gadsby then read an address, stating the objects to be aimed at, which thus concluded :—" To secure an abundance of food to the whole family of man, to give to industry the reward of fair remuneration, and thus to emancipate the country from the certain thralldom of pauperism and abject misery, are objects worthy of the ambition of the noblest, and the contributory labour of the best of our species." As one of the deputation, I felt it my duty to say something of the direction of the produce of this contributory labour. The enemies of free trade had sneered at the intention of the ladies as joining in a political movement, and were saying that it would better befit them to raise a fund for the relief of the prevalent distress ; and many benevolent persons were likely to look more upon the means of present amelioration than to the removal of that which caused the suffering. I said : " There can be no doubt that the ladies who assist in this excellent work, when they endeavour to induce their friends to join this committee, and to obtain presentations to the Bazaar will find one difficulty. It will be objected that the proceeds instead of going to swell the funds of the League should be applied to the immediate relief of the suffering poor during the winter. But the object is not to rescue the poor for only a few weeks from their misery, but to give fair play to their industry, and enable them to procure a greater abundance of food permanently ; in fact to do that which would enable the industrious man to sustain himself, and to secure for his class a benefit which will be



felt for centuries to come. I believe this to be the higher object, the more extended benevolence. We look not so much to the temporary relief of a few thousands only, as to the permanent benefit of millions, who are suffering now, and will continue to suffer, unless relieved by the repeal of the Corn Law." The belief being that the Bazaar would be heartily supported, a discussion arose as to the time of holding it, in which Mrs. Bickham, Mrs. Haughton, Miss Haughton, Mrs. Armitage, Miss Armitage, Mrs. Woolley, Mrs. Potter, Mrs. Prentice, Miss Gifford, Mrs. Hilton, Miss Weston, Miss Satterthwaite, Mrs. and Miss Swindells, Mrs. Gadsby, Mrs. Gill, Mrs. Gunness, and Mrs. Bibby, took a part, and it was resolved that the Bazaar should be held in the beginning of February. A ballot then took place for officers, when Mrs. Cobden was chosen as president of the committee, Mrs. Armitage, as vice-president, and Mrs. Woolley, as secretary. Mr. Wilson, on behalf of the mayor, then tendered the use of the Council, or the boroughreeve's room for future meetings, and the proceedings terminated.

There was much to do in these two months and a half, but woman's zeal was enlisted in the cause of benevolence, and thousands of fair fingers were instantly at work, and everywhere there were eloquent pleaders for co-operation. On the following Saturday the *Manchester Times* contained the names of eighty-five forming the committee, the number of which soon became three hundred and sixty, comprising ladies in every part of the kingdom, each becoming the medium of communication for numbers in each locality. It was intended that the Bazaar should be held in the Town Hall, but it soon became apparent that there would not be room enough there. The Theatre Royal, probably the largest theatre out of London, was at length fixed upon, and its whole interior underwent a change, which converted its somewhat sombre appearance into one of great brilliancy and beauty. The effect was the produc-

tion of the joint industry, talents, and taste of Messrs. Bowden and Edwards, builders, Messrs. Bradford, gas fitters, and Mr. Doveston, upholsterer, aided by Mr. Geo. Wilson and the gentlemen's committee of management, and was thus described in my newspaper at the time :—  
“The pit has been covered over with a good substantial flooring, having a slight incline so as to form an ascent to the dress boxes, corresponding with the inclination of the stage in the contrary direction; or, in other words, the floor declines from either end to the proscenium, and will give to the visitor, when the Bazaar is opened, a much better view of the magnificent scene than could otherwise be obtained. The stage scenery and side wings have been entirely removed, and stalls are fitting up on either side of the stage in their place, and in a line with the dress boxes, which are also converted into stalls. Another line of stalls stretches down the centre of the floor, and the walls and ceiling being covered with handsome white and coloured draperies—the former relieved with pilasters, and the latter disposed in alternate folds of crimson and white radiating from a centre; whilst a cornice of pink drapery, disposed in festoons, gives to the whole a handsome finish. The appearance of the room is that of an immense hall beautifully decorated and lighted; for, in addition to the ordinary glass chandeliers suspended from the boxes, the stage is lighted with gas, each burner having beautiful Chinese shades, with pale blue ground, suspended beneath them, which materially soften the light, while they add to the general effect of the decorations. A splendid mirror against the Charlotte-street end of the immense room, and reflecting its whole length, materially adds to the imposing effect produced by the *coup d'œil* on entering the building. The stalls consist of two tables running parallel with each other, the one behind being slightly elevated to give a better view of the contents; and the only division between the stalls is a

piece of red tape, to mark the extent of each. Clusters of small, but elegant banners, in silk, bearing appropriate inscriptions, depend from the columns supporting the roof, and from the front of the upper boxes. The central stalls are to be occupied, principally, by ladies from distant towns. The upper boxes are to be devoted to the exhibition of the Pottery contribution, which will be placed on shelves rising above each other in about the same degree as the seats do, and thus an excellent view of it will be obtained from every part of the theatre."

The great building, thus brilliantly decorated, gained additional grandeur and beauty when filled with an almost endless variety of elegant contributions, which gave the scene rather the character of a great Art Exposition than of a mere Bazaar. It was an approach to the greater exhibitions that were to follow—the Covent Garden League Bazaar—the Exposition in Paris of 1849, and the Crystal Palace Exhibition for the Arts of all Nations of 1851. The attraction and the success are shown by the following statement :—

#### RECEIPTS OF MONDAY, JANUARY 31st.

From Visitors, at 2s. 6d. each . . . .	£200	0	0
Sales at the Stalls . . . . .	1,508	3	2
	<hr/> £1,717 3 2		

#### TUESDAY'S RECEIPTS.

From Visitors, at 1s. each . . . . .	£284	0	0
Sales at the Stalls . . . . .	1,208	13	0
	<hr/> £1,492 13 0		

#### WEDNESDAY'S RECEIPTS.

From Visitors, at 1s. each . . . . .	£261	0	0
Sales at the Stalls . . . . .	800	8	8
	<hr/> £1,061 8 8		

#### THURSDAY'S RECEIPTS.

From Visitors, at 1s. each . . . . .	£223	3	0
Sales at the Stalls . . . . .	821	17	10
	<hr/> £1,045 0 10		

#### FRIDAY'S RECEIPTS.

From Visitors, at 1s. each . . . . .	£197	17	0
Sales at the Stalls . . . . .	585	15	10
	<hr/> £783 12 10		

## SATURDAY'S RECEIPTS.

Morning Visitors, at 1s. each ....	£49	17	0
Evening Visitors, at 6d. each ....	41	19	6
Sales at the Stalls .....	988	18	10
	<hr/> £1,080 15 4		

## MONDAY'S RECEIPTS, FEBRUARY 7TH.

Morning Visitors, at 1s. each ....	£28	9	0
Evening Visitors, at 6d. each ....	36	6	6
Sales at the Stalls .....	294	18	0
	<hr/> £359 13 6		

## TUESDAY'S RECEIPTS.

Morning Visitors, at 1s. each ....	£33	10	0
Evening Visitors, at 6d. each ....	47	9	6
Sales at the Stalls .....	311	8	7
	<hr/> £392 8 1		

## WEDNESDAY'S RECEIPTS.

Visitors, at 6d. each .....	£55	10	6
Sales at the Stalls .....	173	2	7
	<hr/> £228 13 1		

## THURSDAY'S RECEIPTS.

Visitors, at 6d. each .....	£51	17	0
Sales at the Stalls .....	135	5	0
	<hr/> £186 2 0		

Total Receipts .....	£8,333	8	0
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To this were added £87, the proceeds of a sale by auction, after the close of the Bazaar; £1,100 of donations in money and the proceeds of some valuables, retained for after-sale; making the total receipts close upon TEN THOUSAND POUNDS.

## CHAPTER XX.

### MEETING OF PARLIAMENT.

On Thursday, February the 3rd, 1842, the Queen opened Parliament in person. Upon the previous Monday, the Duke of Buckingham had resigned his office in the ministry, and the protectionists, attributing the resignation to his knowledge of some forthcoming change in the Corn Laws, were in extreme alarm. The free traders anticipated no more than some miserable compromise, unworthy of acceptance. They did not even anticipate any acknowledgment of the existing distress, which, in the previous session, had been either totally denied by the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel, or attributed to temporary causes needing no legislative measure. It was seen, however, that the agitation of the League, and the proofs it had adduced of wide-spread and intense suffering, the result of a selfish, unjust, and cruel legislation, had not been without their effects. The Queen was permitted to acknowledge, "with deep regret, the continued distress in the manufacturing districts of the country," and that "the sufferings and privations which had resulted from it," had been "borne with exemplary patience and fortitude." Her Majesty was made to recommend to the consideration of both houses "the laws which affect the imports of corn, and other articles." This was more than



the free traders expected in the speech. There was to be a change in the Corn Laws, and an alteration in the tariff, and intense curiosity was excited as to what those changes might be.

Nothing concerning the intentions of the ministers was elicited in the debates on the Address. It was moved in the Lords, by the Marquis of Abercorn, who hinted to the manufacturers that much of their prosperity depended upon the prosperity of agriculture. Lord Melbourne, who, in office, had said that it would be madness to think of total repeal, expressed himself as equally opposed to the sliding scale. Lord Brougham, for himself and Earl Spencer (who was absent), declared that the only way to deal with the Corn Laws was to get rid of them altogether. Earl Fitzwilliam drew from the Duke of Buckingham the admission that he had retired from the ministry because a measure was to be proposed that he could not sanction; but he did not say what that measure was to be. In the Commons Sir Robert Peel announced, that on the following Wednesday he would state what his intentions were. There was a week of intense curiosity to intervene. The Duke of Richmond had refused to allow his son, the Earl of March, to move the address, and the agriculturists were in great alarm. The thorough free traders were everywhere girding up their loins, believing that what displeased the Dukes of Buckingham and Richmond might still be a very wretched measure for the country.

The following is a list of the appointment of deputies from conferences and anti-corn-law associations, who met at the Crown and Anchor, on Tuesday, 8th February, all with instructions *to entertain no proposal for any compromise*, but to demand perfect freedom to import that food for the want of which her Majesty acknowledged that her people were enduring severe distress. The list contains all the appointments communicated to the Council in Manchester; but it is necessarily defective, as great numbers of

appointments had been announced to the Metropolitan Association only:—

ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE.	T. G. Clayton.	J. D. Carr.
Abel Buckley.	George Oxley.	T. Sheffield.
Alfred Bayner.	William Murgatroyd.	E. Castle.
ACCRINGTON.	M. Illingworth.	R. Cowen.
Rev. Henry Lings.	Titus Salt.	George Thompson.
ANDOVER.	James Cousen.	DENTON AND HAUGHTON.
Rev. John Young.	Thomas Bennards.	William Wilson.
James Baker.	BRIGHOUSE AND HIP-	John Bowler.
BISHOPS STORTFORD.	PERHOLME.	DEVIZES.
William Chaplin.	John Crossley.	Rev. J. S. Bunce.
BILSTON.	BURNLEY.	George Wesley.
Rev. W. H. Bonner.	James Roberts.	DONCASTER.
E. B. Lovell.	John Holgate.	E. Lankester, M.D.
E. B. Dimmack.	CHORLEY.	DUNFERMLINE.
BOLTON.	Abraham Turner.	D. Dervur.
John Dean.	John Hodgkinson.	Charles Arthur.
Henry Hollins.	COLCHESTER.	James Aytoun.
Henry Ashworth.	James Hurnard.	DUMBARTON.
Edmund Ashworth.	COLNE.	James Stirling.
J. R. Barnes.	Thomas Smith.	DUNDEE.
Thomas Cullen.	CAMDEN TOWN.	Edward Baxter.
Robert Heywood.	Rev. H. S. Leatom.	D. Baxter.
C. S. Darbishire.	Thomas Moore.	G. W. Baxter.
James Arrowsmith.	J. S. Deed.	EBLEY ASSOCIATION.
BRIDGENORTH.	Rev. T. W. Grittins.	Rev. B. Parsons.
Two Deputies.	Rev. — Effingham.	James Lewis.
BRIGHTON.	CHESHAM.	EBLEY CHAPEL.
Rev. J. Edwards.	Rev. D. Thomas.	Rev. B. Parsons.
BELPER.	William Biggs.	Philip Oadley.
William Brown.	CONGLETON.	EDINBURGH ASSOCIATION
BROMLEY, KENT.	John Johnson.	D. McLaren.
John Churcher.	CARLISLE.	John Dunlop.
George Severting.	John Dixon.	William Dunlop.
BRADFORD, WILTS.	T. T. Railton.	Edward Cruickshank.
John Foster.	J. Steel.	James Aytoun.
BRAINTREE, ESSEX.	J. Ross.	FROME.
S. Courtauld.	J. Carrick.	Mr. Ferme.
BRADFORD.	G. Saul.	FAIRFORD, GLOUCESTER
H. Leah.	J. Lowthian.	SHIRE.
R. Milligan.	Joseph Ferguson.	William Thomas.

FORFAR.	LEEK.	Holland Hoole.
Rev. J. Y. Strachan.	Joseph Surr.	Thomas Ashton.
Rev. Mr. Lowe.	LEICESTER.	Daniel Lee.
GLOUCESTER.	Rev. T. Stevenson.	L. Roston.
Rev. W. Rodway.	John Noble.	H. Rawson.
Samuel Bowley.	S. Hull.	E. Armitage.
GLASGOW.	Rev. S. Wrigg.	Rev. J. W. Massie.
Alexander Johnson	Alfred Tebbut.	Rev. W. Mc.Kerrow.
Walter Buchannan.	Rev. Joseph Goadby.	Rev. Daniel Hearne.
James Lumsden.	John Harvey.	Edward Evans.
GREAT TORRINGTON.	John Tyers.	George Hadfield.
S. Westall.	C. Inchley.	George Horsefield.
HALSHAW MOOR.	T. P. Hall.	W. B. Watkins.
J. Lord.	W. Biggs.	James Chadwick.
R. Lord.	R. Harris.	MANSFIELD.
G. Barnes.	W. Parker.	Henry Hollins.
T. Barnes.	LINKFIELD STREET.	Rev. C. W. Robberds.
HEBDEN BBIDGE.	Thomas Dodd.	MITCHAM.
John Riley.	LONGTON.	Samuel Makepeace.
James Hodgson.	Rev. H. Atley.	Joseph Barton.
Thomas Sutcliffe.	Thomas Scott.	Joseph Booth.
HOLYWELL.	MAYBOLE.	John Marchant.
Rev. Ellis Hughes.	John M. Thomson.	James West.
HONITON.	MANCHESTER.	Morys Bolt.
Rev. W. Wright.	Sir Thomas Potter.	Philip Purcell.
HUDDERSFIELD.	George Wilson.	Jeremiah Harding.
William Brook.	John Brooks.	Robert Williams.
Frederick Swann.	Robert Hyde Greg.	MOTTRAM.
Joseph Batley.	William Rawson.	Richard Matley.
William Williams.	Thomas Bazley, jun.	NORTHWICH.
John Robinson.	William Evans.	John Thompson, and a
Josiah Conder.	Archibald Prentice.	Wesleyan.
HALIFAX.	J. C. Dyer.	NOTTINGHAM.
Jonathan Ackroyd.	James Kershaw.	Rev. James Edwards.
William Morris.	W. R. Callender.	William Vickers.
ILKESTON.	W. Bickham.	J. Heard.
Rev. D. Davies.	William Besley.	J. Dunn.
Rev. J. Peggs.	T. Harbottle.	NEW BASFORD, NOTTS.
Joseph Bailey.	Robert Stewart.	William Sisling.
LEEDS.	Edward Watkin.	Richard Boikin.
H. C. Marshall.	Samuel Lees.	John W. Barton.
H. Stansfield.	T. B. Potter.	Isaac Atkin.

PRESCOT.	Rev. Benjamin Parsons.	Mr. Martin.
C. E. Rawlins.	J. C. Symons, Esq.	Mr. Coles.
POOLE.	Philip Cadby.	Mr. Hodierno.
Rev. Samuel Bulgin.	James Lewis.	Mr. Grice.
QUEENSHEAD.	William T. Paris.	Mr. Palmer.
John Foster.	STOURBRIDGE.	Mr. Sutton.
READING.	Mr. Hughes.	Mr. Clarke.
F. P. Everett.	TODMORDEN.	WARRINGTON.
A. Perry, M.D.	Rev. R. Wolfenden.	W. Crossfield.
ROCHDALE.	Mr. Peter Ormerod.	Rev. F. Bishop.
John Petrie.	UXBRIDGE.	WEST BROMWICH.
John Bright.	Rev. J. G. Stamper.	J. Spittle.
John Hoyle.	John Pearman.	Rev. William Stokes.
Edward Briggs.	J. G. Taylor.	WIGAN.
RASTRICK.	Two others.	Rev. William Roaf.
J. T. Clay.	WATFORD.	Rev. Wiliam Marshall.
William Helm.	S. Salter.	Mr. Acton.
— Armitage.	Joseph Rogers.	WORCESTER.
SHEFFIELD.	Edmund Hull.	Rev. James Ward.
Edward Smith.	WALTHAMSTOW.	WESTBURY, WILTS.
William Ibbotson.	William Pymar.	R. Overbury.
SMETHWICKE.	WEST HAM.	J. Wilkins.
Rev. D. A. Owen.	Mr. Ashdown.	WOODBIDGE, SUFFOLK.
STROUD.	Mr. Elwall.	Rev. John Smith.
Rev. John Burder.	Mr. Homan.	John Street.

The deputies from the country were joined by a considerable number from the metropolitan districts. Nearly six hundred persons were present, all determined, as it proved, to accept of no compromise. We, of the deputation from the north, entertained some fear, that, amongst the numerous deputies from newly formed associations in London and its neighbourhood, there might be some disposed to sacrifice future entire freedom to present concession as promised by the whigs and expected from the tories. We were soon convinced that our fear was groundless. Mr. Ashworth, of Bolton, had moved the appointment of a finance committee. In seconding the motion the Rev. T. Spencer, of Bath, a poor-law guardian, declared his firm conviction that the new poor law ought not to have been enforced without the repeal of the Corn Law.

I followed, and having stated the successful result of the Bazaar at Manchester, as a proof that the League would be heartily supported, I said that the contest between the two parties in Parliament, who recognised no other party, either there or out of doors, would only be whether Lord John's fixed duty, or Sir Robert's modified slide, should be adopted, while the just demand was that there should be no duty at all; and that the country by the determined front it might assume, should tell both factions that nothing short of an entire abolition of the obnoxious laws would be satisfactory. The burst of cheers that followed gave unequivocal proof that nothing was farther from the mind of the assembled deputies than any compromise with either of the two old political parties that claimed the right to rule. The chairman, Mr. Duncan McLaren, of Edinburgh, announced that his instructions from his constituents, were to demand the full measure of justice, and again the enthusiastic and prolonged cheers showed, that if any one came there with the slightest idea of compromise, he would find no responding voice in that assembly. Mr. John Bright, from that time forward standing forward amongst the first of the leaders in the movement, made a speech full of power and effect. His motion was to pledge the deputies never to swerve from their purpose, nor relax in their efforts, until the total repeal of the Corn Laws was accomplished, and he enforced it with so much argument, and so energetic and fervid an eloquence, that at the close of his spirit-stirring address the whole assembly rose and testified their approbation by loud and long-continued hurrahs. The Rev. Dr. Pye Smith followed in a different strain, enlisting the Christian sympathies of his auditory in the sufferings of the poor. And then came Mr. Timothy Falvey, a silk weaver, of Macclesfield, who had been engaged as a lecturer, whose natural eloquence on behalf of the deeply wronged of his own order, showed that the hitherto inarticulate groanings of the oppressed multi-



tude were now to find fit and forcible utterance. Daniel O'Connell followed the Macclesfield silk weaver. All sorts of talent were there—every diversity of power. The meeting was assured by the great agitator that its agitation was certain of success if continued with intensity, energy, and singleness of purpose. Mr. John Brooks, of Manchester, followed O'Connell in a speech scarcely less effective. The chairman, before the close of the meeting, stated that an interview had been sought with Sir Robert Peel, and he was hourly expecting his reply. Sir Robert, however, was too cautious to comply with the request. The following are the notes that passed on the occasion :—

“ Crown and Anchor, Strand, Feb. 7.

“ Sir,—As chairman of a preliminary meeting of deputies from associations and religious congregations from various parts of the kingdom, I am directed to request that you will favour the deputation with an interview on the subject of the repeal of the Corn Laws, if at all consistent with your convenience, previous to the announcement of the intentions of the government in Parliament, on Wednesday next.—I have the honour to be, Sir, yours,

“ JOHN BROOKS.

“ The Right Hon. Sir Robert Peel, Bart., &c.”

“ Whitehall, Feb. 8th, 1842.

“ Sir,—I am directed by Sir R. Peel to acknowledge the receipt of your note of Feb. 7, requesting, on behalf of a deputation from associations and religious congregations from various parts of the kingdom, an interview with Sir Robert Peel, on the subject of the repeal of the Corn and Provision Laws, previous to the announcement of the government on Wednesday next. Sir Robert Peel desires me to express his regret that it is not in his power, on account of the pre-engagements into which he has entered, to make the appointment which you desire.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

“ John Brooks, Esq.”

“ W. H. STEVENSON.

The meeting of the deputies on Wednesday was a highly interesting one. Mr. Laurence Heyworth put the question of repeal as a simple one of justice, and the Rev. Mr. Cairns, of Paisley, produced a powerful impression by his account of the state of that dreadfully suffering town, and by his eloquent denunciations of the impiety of intercepting the gifts which Providence had bestowed for the benefit

of man. The Rev. Mr. Burder, of Stroud, followed in the same strain; and several other speakers combined statistical details and impressive argument with great effect. As the meeting proceeded the feeling grew stronger and stronger at the refusal of the minister to hear an exposition of the condition of the people, and when Mr. Boulton, of Birmingham, seconded by Mr. Wilkinson, of Exeter, proposed that the deputies should proceed in a body to the House of Commons, there was an evident demonstration that Peel's refusal was considered as adding insult to injury. The Rev. J. W. Massie enforced the recommendation with impassioned and rousing energy, answered by a burst of enthusiasm, and the proposal was unanimously assented to, the whole body, which, although many had left, not anticipating such a movement, numbered about 500, proceeded two and two, arm in arm, along the Strand and down Parliament-street to the House, attracting much curiosity during their course. My companion in this progression was a worthy north country knight of rather cautious whig politics, but who strongly participated in the feeling of indignation at the long denial of justice to the suffering people. I told him that in coming from an interview with Jeremy Bentham, eleven years before, I had seen William the Fourth pass down that street to dissolve a Parliament which refused to pass the Reform Bill, and expressed my belief that the people would now, as they did then, overturn the resisting powers. Upon the arrival of the deputies at St. Stephens, they stopped on each side of the door opening into the lobby of the house, and application was made by the chairman for admission into the lobby, of at least a portion of the deputation. This, however, was flatly refused. The most urgent entreaty was used by many, but without the slightest effect, and the delegates were most rudely hustled by the police as they stood upon the pavement opposite the house, striving to speak to their representatives as they entered. While

they stood there all the members who passed in were saluted with the cries of "total repeal" and "cheap food." It was a striking sight to observe the real representatives of the productive classes from every part of the kingdom, country and town, waiting outside of what ought to have been the people's house imploring justice for the suffering millions. Finding that their applications for admission were treated with as little ceremony as their request for an interview with the Premier had been, the delegates drew off from the doors of the house and congregated in Palace Yard, where I briefly addressed them thus: "The doors of the very lobby of the house are closed against us by order of those in power. It is impossible for us to get in to speak to the members as they pass. The Corn Laws were passed under the protection of the bayonet, and its supporters now ensconce themselves under the truncheons of the police. But the time is fast coming when the voice of the people will be heard, and their oppressors will quail before it. Let us give three hearty cheers for the cause of free trade." The cheers were given with a voice that might be heard within the house. It was a strange scene of excitement amongst sober-minded persons—an indication of the stronger and more dangerous excitement of the masses, if not counteracted by a confident hope that the League would ultimately prevail. The delegates proceeded up Parliament-street. Just at Privy Gardens they met Sir R. Peel proceeding in his carriage to the house. He seemed to think at first that they were going to cheer him, but when he heard the angry shouts of "No Corn Law;" "Down with the monopoly;" "Give bread and labour," he leaned back in his carriage, grave and pale. When he lay on his death bed, after according the full measure of justice, I thought with some compunction of that scene; but that expression of disapprobation might not be without its effect in hastening the change in his opinions and course. When he met those men that day he had matured

his intention to prepare a modified measure which he knew they would regard as a mockery, unless he believed that their declaration for broad principles was one by which they did not mean to abide.

On that same Wednesday, Messrs. R. H. Greg, W. Rawson, J. Bright, J. Brooks, J. Dixon, and W. Evans, deputed by the conference, had an interview with Lord John Russell. They stated their deliberate conviction that no less a measure of relief than that of total repeal would ever satisfy the country, or restore its prosperity; and exposed the fallacy of a fixed duty, and urged its relinquishment on his lordship. But years of intense suffering on the part of the people had not yet convinced him; he gave respectful attention to the statements of the deputation, but gave them no reason to believe that they had effected any change in his opinion. He had made up his mind to abide by a fixed duty, which the repealers were now in the way of designating "a fixed injustice." He very probably thought they would give in their adhesion to him on that evening. Peel's expected modification recognised higher duties, with all the uncertainty of the slide. Miss Martineau says:—"The whigs were delighted to find that the minister had failed to come up to their own point of an 8s. fixed duty." It is, perhaps, too much to say that they were delighted; but no doubt visions of return to office flitted before them.

The house and gallery were crowded. Below the bar was seen a number of distinguished strangers, amongst whom was the Duke of Cambridge. Peel rose to speak at five o'clock, and deep silence instantly prevailed. The minister had not his usual confident manner. "He was uneasy and nervous," says Miss Martineau, "and there was no argument in his speech." He admitted the distress and deplored it, but said that he could not attribute it, in any degree, to the operation of the Corn Laws. His hearers wondered what would follow.



There was "a combination of causes acting concurrently," which had produced the distress. There had been too much facility of credit in 1837 and 1838; an interruption of our amicable relations with China; monetary affairs in the United States had lessened the demand for our manufactures; and over-production at home. The question he said was not what was the price of bread, but what was the command over it. The consumption of food in Prussia was less than it was in England; the consumption of sugar in France was less than it was in England; wages were less on the continent than they were in England; there was distress in England, but still England consumed more than other countries on the continent. A total repeal of the Corn Laws, he said, would add agricultural to manufacturing distress. It would be well to be independent of foreign countries for bread. "What is coming?" thought the listening free traders. He did not mean an absolute independence. There should be a supply when there was a scarcity. He wished to have the price of wheat to oscillate between 54s. and 58s. He thought the agriculturists ought not to expect more. He would have a return of averages from an increased number of places, and he would reduce the scale of duties. The highest duty at that time was 38s. 8d.; he would reduce it to 20s. Here was a change! The 38 feet 8 inches wall of exclusion was to be pulled down till it was only 20 feet high! The whigs exchanged significant glances. Sir Robert proceeded to read his new scale. When wheat was at 51s. the duty should be 20s.; at 52s. and under 55s., 18s.; at 55s. and under 56s., 17s.; and for each shilling of rise of price there should be a diminution of duty, till at 65s. there should be a duty of 7s. Then from 66s. to 69s. the duty should be 6s.; and then a reduction of one shilling of duty for every shilling of rise until at 73s. to 74s. the duty should be one shilling. The dead silence which prevailed while Sir Robert was reading his scale was followed, when



he had concluded, by derisive laughter on the opposition benches, and a loud buz of conversation on both sides of the house, which did not quite subside during the remainder of the speech. He avowed that when wheat was under 51s. his intention was to give the agriculturists that "effectual protection" to which he thought they were entitled on account of the burthens they exclusively bore. We shall hear more of those "exclusive burthens" by and bye. There was no debate. Lord John Russell only asked a question about the mode of taking the averages. Mr. Cobden satisfied himself with denouncing the measure as an insult to a suffering people—a people whose patience had been extolled by the right honourable baronet—and a people whose patience deserved a very different treatment from the landed aristocracy, and from the cabinet, which was the instrument of that aristocracy.

As soon as Sir Robert Peel's plan had been proposed, such of the deputies as had remained in the lobbies and gallery of the house adjourned to Brown's Hotel, where they found a number of their colleagues assembled, and several resolutions were prepared to be submitted to the next morning's meeting, in order that no time might be lost in putting the country in possession of their opinions. On the Thursday morning all the deputies, numbering more than 700, were in their places, and, on the proposition of Mr. McLaren, Mr. P. A. Taylor, of London, was called to the chair. Endeavours had been made to convince some of them, that, as the protectionists would be certain to support Peel's measure, not as satisfactory to them but as the best they could obtain under the circumstances, it would be well to give a favourable consideration to the moderate fixed duty, which would be supported by the whigs; but these representations either had no effect, or if listened to with favour, had not encouraged any one to oppose himself to the general determination to accept of no compromise. The following resolutions, proposed by

the author of "The Corn-Law Catechism," seconded by Mr. Hamer Stansfield, of Leeds, were passed unanimously :

"That, in the opinion of this meeting, the measure announced by her Majesty's government on the subject of the Corn Laws, so far from holding out the slightest prospect of any relief of the distress of the country, is an insult to a patient and suffering people; and the deputies view such a proposal as an indication that the landed aristocracy of this country are destitute of all sympathy for the poor, and are resolved, if permitted by an outraged people, to persist in a course of selfish policy, which will involve the destruction of every interest in the country."

"That the deputies now present, having further deliberately considered the proposition of her Majesty's government on the subject of the Corn Laws, this evening announced in the House of Commons, deem it their duty on their own behalf, and in the name of their constituents, to record their emphatic condemnation of it, and their solemn protest against it, as a total denial of the just demands of the people of this country, and as evincing a determination to perpetuate an oppressive, an unrighteous system, together with all the essential evils resulting from the operation of the existing Corn Laws."

"That the anti-corn-law associations throughout the United Kingdom, and all other friends to an immediate and total abolition of all duties and restrictions upon the necessary food of the people, are earnestly requested to take measures for expressing, without delay, in every constitutional manner, their hostility to the proposed measure of her Majesty's government, and their fixed and unalterable determination not to relax in their exertions until a measure of complete justice is obtained, and to consent to no compromise of the sacred principle upon which the agitation for the abolition of the Corn Law is based."

"That, to the end that every available support may be given to Mr. Villiers, in his intended resolution for the total and immediate repeal of the Corn and Provision Laws, the deputies recommend that all petitions be forwarded immediately for presentation, and that any protests or resolutions calculated to sustain the deputation in the approaching contests may be forwarded to the office of the Metropolitan Anti-Corn-Law Association, 448, Strand, London."

"That it is desirable that these resolutions be immediately published in the provincial papers, and that the committees of anti-corn-law associations be requested to take measures to effect that object."

A memorial to the Queen was also agreed to, expressing utter want of confidence in her Majesty's advisers, or in any ministers who would not propose the repeal of the

Corn Laws. On Friday, Saturday, and Monday, meetings of the conference were held; and then the members separated, each, in his own locality, to aid in the agitation which had been renewed with increased intensity. In hundreds of places, the free traders had not waited to read the reports of the spirit-stirring speeches delivered in the conference, their own parliament, or the resolutions commendatory of the course to be pursued, but had met simultaneously, and declared their determination never to rest satisfied until every shred of the poverty-creating law should be destroyed. Within a few hours of the arrival, in Manchester, on Thursday morning, of the papers containing Sir Robert Peel's plan, a numerous meeting of the Anti-Corn-Law Association was held, Mr. George Wilson in the chair, in which the chairman, Mr. Thomas Bazley, Mr. Alderman Callender, Mr. Grave, Mr. T. B. Potter, Mr. Robert Gardner, Mr. Absalom Watkin, Mr. Andrew Hall, Mr. James Howie, Mr. F. Warren, Mr. George Hadfield, Mr. William Shuttleworth, and others denounced the ministers' new scale of duties as an insult to the community. In the evening, short as was the notice, and although the admission was a shilling, the proceeds to go to the Bazaar fund, a meeting was held in the Theatre, attended by upwards of 2,000 persons, Mr. Wilson in the chair, at which resolutions of determined perseverance in the demand for total repeal were passed by acclamation.

Following these manifestations, came the London newspapers, with reports of the proceedings of the conference, which gave a further impulse to the agitation. A requisition to the mayor, (William Nield, Esq.,) signed by upwards of a thousand merchants, manufacturers, and others, was presented, and a meeting was held in the Town Hall, on Tuesday, February 15th, Mr. Thomas Bazley in the chair, but it was found that the large room would not hold one half of those who crowded for admittance, and after the resolutions which had been pre-

pared were read, it was agreed to adjourn the meeting to Stevenson Square. The people then left the Hall, and to the number of at least 5,000, moved in procession through St. Ann's Square, Market-street, and Oldham-street, to the appointed place of meeting, increasing as they went until the number exceeded 7,000, and almost filled the square. After several energetic speeches, the meeting was again adjourned till the following Monday evening, that again, if occasion required, there might be a further demonstration of opinion upon the new scheme. In the evening, in the Town Hall, Salford, a crowded meeting was held, at which spirited resolutions in opposition to the measures were passed. A meeting of the Young Men's Anti-Monopoly Association was held, on Wednesday evening, in the Athenæum, with the same result. On Thursday, the Chamber of Commerce met, and after a spirited exposition of Sir Robert Peel's plan, passed a series of resolutions, that no proposition could be entertained which had not for its basis an entire repeal of all duties on the importation of food. Crowded meetings were also held at Stockport, Rochdale, Warrington, Wigan, and other towns in the district. I find the following in my paper, of February 19th, introductory of reports of these meetings: "The present week has been one of such general excitement, that we do not recollect its parallel for many years; and, though we have more space to devote to news than any other weekly paper in the town, it would be impossible to give more than a sketch of the proceedings at the different public meetings, on the subject of the ministerial proposition." Similar excitement prevailed in every manufacturing district of the kingdom, greatly tending to reconcile the agriculturists to the proposed change. They began to think that a 20s. protection when wheat was at 50s. was, after all, a thing not to be rejected. If they did not take that, they might have worse.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### SIR R. PEEL'S NEW SLIDING SCALE.

In the House of Commons, on Monday, February 14th, on the order of the day being read for the adjourned debate it was opened by Lord John Russell. His speech was an able exposition of the principles of free trade, but with the lame and impotent conclusion that a fixed duty was in accordance with them, and he moved as an amendment; "That this house, considering the evils which have been caused by the present Corn Laws, and *especially* by the fluctuations of the graduated or sliding scale, is not prepared to adopt the measure of her Majesty's government, which is founded on the same principles, and is likely to be attended by similar results." Mr. Gladstone followed, and contended that the sliding scale proposed was better than a fixed duty. Mr. Charles Wood entered into a number of details, to show that a fixed duty was superior to a sliding scale. Mr. Liddell considered the measure as one likely to satisfy both the agricultural and commercial interests. Dr. Bowring made many interesting statistical details to controvert Sir Robert Peel's deductions as to the comparative condition of the people of this country and of the continent; and then came Mr. Ferrand, the buffoon of the house, who abused the manufacturers, and their wives and daughters, and said their only object was to make fortunes by reducing wages. The debate was pro-



tracted through the nights of Tuesday and Wednesday, dully enough, for the main point of discussion was whether the country should have the sliding scale or a fixed duty, relieved occasionally by some sturdy agriculturist, who complained of the removal of any protection. On the division, the numbers were :—

For the original motion, ..... 349

For the amendment,..... 226

The thorough free traders felt themselves at liberty to vote for Lord John Russell's amendment, for it did not commit them to the principle of a fixed duty. The members in the minority of 226 were soon to be tested as to their opinion of total repeal, and the free-trade electors of the country were to be shown how many of that number were deserving of their support. On the following Friday, Mr. Villiers brought forward his testing motion, and forced upon the house a discussion upon the real merits of the question. His speech was full of admirable argument, and embraced all the great bearings of the question. The debate, in which Mr. Brotherton, Dr. Bowring, Mr. Mark Philips, and Mr. Milner Gibson, took a prominent part, occupied the nights of Friday, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, on which latter evening Sir Robert Peel spoke. He had restrained his colleagues from taking any part in the discussion, judging, rightly enough, that he was sure of an overwhelming majority, not only without argument, but without even the show of it; but he could not restrain the unruly band of his supporters—he could not even confine them to those inarticulate cries with which passion may be instinctively expressed, and every now and then some one of them would break forth from the pack, and give tongue. He had tried the silent system, and it had failed in his hands, and he was compelled to take upon himself the task of putting an end to the debate, which was telling powerfully on the country, although the free-trade advocates were listened to with impatience in a

house seldom tolerant of close reasoning. He, therefore, rose, and, in a speech of great length, great apparent or rather great expressed candour, and great plausibility, attempted to show that the distress which confessedly prevailed was not to be attributed to the Corn Law alone, but to other causes, which were only temporary; such as injudicious banking operations, both at home and in America, adroitly, and in accordance with the rules of single-speech "Hamilton's Parliamentary Logic," substituting effect for cause—the Corn Law being the main source of monetary difficulties, both at home and in the United States. He commended his own bill, as likely to prevent sudden inundations of foreign corn; and, in reliance upon the majority at his back, was pressing for an immediate division. Lord John Russell, who showed a much more determined spirit in opposition than he had done in office, protested against this speedy legislation, and the debate was once more adjourned.

On Thursday, the debate was diversified by a bold and telling speech from Mr. Cobden. Mr. Villiers had said that the debate had been one between two political parties, both of whom had striven to avoid the real question at issue, which Mr. Cobden said was simply, how far it was just, honest, or expedient, that any tax whatever should be laid on the people's food. He went on to controvert the fallacy, as old as the Corn Law itself, that high wages accompanied high prices of food. He charged the house with ignorance on this part of the question, and when derisive laughter, and cries of "Oh! oh!" arose from members of the ministerial side of the house, he turned round to them, and said:—

"Yes! I say an ignorance upon this subject which I never saw equalled in any body of working men in the north of England. (Oh, oh.) Do you think that the fallacy of 1815, which to my astonishment I heard put forth in the house last week, namely, that wages rise and fall with the price of food, can prevail in the minds of the working men, after the experience of the last three years? Have you not had bread

higher during that time than during any three years during the last twenty years? Yes. Yet during those three years the wages of labour in every branch of industry have suffered a greater decline than in any three years before. (Hear, hear.) Then I am told that the price of labour in this country is so much higher than the wages abroad, that the Corn Law must be kept up in order to keep up labour to the proper level. Sir, I deny that labour is higher paid in this country than on the continent. (Hear, hear.) On the contrary I am prepared to prove, from documents on the table of your own house, that the price of labour is cheaper here than in any part of the globe. (Oh, and hear.) I hear an expression of dissent from the other side, but I say to honourable gentlemen, when they measure the labour of an Englishman against the labour of the foreigner, they measure a day's labour indeed with a day's labour, but they forget the relative quality of the labour. (Hear.) I maintain, if quality is to be the test, the labour of England is the cheapest in the world. (Hear, hear.) Go into any city from Calais to Vienna, containing a population of more than 10,000 inhabitants, and will you not find numbers of English artisans working side by side with the natives of the place, and earning twice as much as they do, or even more? Yet the masters who employ them declare, notwithstanding the pay is higher, that the English labour is cheaper to them than native labour. Yet we are told that the object of the manufacturers in repealing the Corn Laws is to lower wages to the level of the continent! It was justly said by the honourable member for Kilmarnock, that the manufacturers did not require to lower the rate of wages in order to gain higher profits. If you want proof of the prosperity of manufactures, you will find it when wages are high, but when wages drop the profits of the manufacturer drop also. Sir, by deteriorating such a vast population as that employed in manufactures, you run the risk of spoiling not the animal man only, but the intellectual creature also. It is not from the wretched that great things can emanate—it is not a potato-fed population that ever led the world in arts or arms, in manufactures or commerce. (Ironical cheers from the ministerial side.) If you want your people to be virtuous and happy, you must take care that they are well fed. Upon this assumption, then, that the manufacturers want to reduce wages, and upon the assumption that the Corn Law keeps up the price of labour, we are going to pass a law to tax the food of the hard-working, deserving population. (Hear, hear.) What must be the result? You have heard from the right honourable baronet's answer, the fallacy about our competing with foreign manufacturers. He has told you we export forty or fifty millions. You tax the bones and muscles of your people. You put a double weight upon their shoulders, and then you turn round upon them and tell them to run a race with Ger-

many and France. I would ask, with Mr. Deacon Hume, who has been before quoted in this house, 'To whom do the energies of the British people belong? Are they theirs, or are they yours?' (Hear, hear, and cheers.) Think you that these energies were given to the British people that they might struggle for a bare existence, whilst you take from them half of what they earn? (Cheers.) Is this doing justice to 'the high-mettled racer?' (Hear, hear.) Why you don't treat your horses so. (Cheers.) You give your cattle food and rest in proportion to their toil, but men in England are now actually treated worse. Yes, 10,000 of them were last winter treated worse than your dogs and your horses. (Cheers.) What is the pretence upon which you tax the people's food? We have been told by the right honourable baronet that the object of the law is to fix a certain price for corn. Since I have been listening to this debate, in which I heard it proposed by a prime minister to fix the price of corn, I doubted whether or not we had gone back to the days of our Edwards again, and whether we had or had not travelled back some three or four centuries, when they used to fix the price of a tablecloth or a pair of shoes. What an avocation for a legislature! To fix the price on corn! Why that should be done in the open markets by the dealers. (Cheers.) You don't fix the price of cotton, or silk, or iron, or tin. Why don't you? But how are you to fix this price of corn? Going back some ten years, the right honourable baronet finds the average price of corn is 56s. 10d.; and, therefore, says he, I propose to keep up the price of wheat from 54s. to 58s. The right honourable baronet's plan means that or nothing. I see in a useful little book, called the *Parliamentary Pocket Companion*, in which there are some nice little descriptions of ourselves—(laughter)—under the head 'Cayley,' that that gentleman is described as being the advocate of 'such a course of legislation, with regard to agriculture, as will keep wheat at 64s. a quarter—(hear, hear)—new milk and cheese at from 52s. to 60s. per cwt.; wool and butter at 1s. per lb. each, and other produce in proportion.' (Hear, hear, and laughter.) Now it might be very amusing to find that there were to be found gentlemen still at large—(hear, hear, and great laughter)—who advocated the principle of the interposition of Parliament to fix the price at which articles should be sold; but when we find a prime minister coming down to Parliament to avow such principles, it really becomes anything but amusing. (Great cheering from the opposition.) I ask the right honourable baronet, and I pause for a reply, is he prepared to carry out that principle in the articles of cotton and wool?—(Hear, hear.)

"Sir Robert Peel said it was impossible to fix the price of food by legislation.—(Loud cheers from the ministerial side.)

"Mr. Cobden: Then on what are we legislating? (Counter cheers



from the opposition.) I thank the right honourable baronet for his avowal. Perhaps then he will oblige us by trying to do so. Supposing, however, that he will make the attempt, I ask the right honourable gentleman, and I again pause for a reply,—will he try to legislate so as to keep up the price of cotton, silk, and wool? No reply. Then we come to this conclusion, that we are not legislating for the universal people. (Tremendous cheers.) If the agriculturists are to have the benefit of a law founded on the calculation of a ten years' average, to keep up their price at that average, I ask, are the manufacturers to have it too? (Hear, hear.) Take the ironmongers of the midland counties—the manufacturers of the very articles the agriculturists consume. Their goods have been depreciated thirty per cent. in the last ten years. Are they to continue to exchange their commodities for the corn of the landlord, who has the benefit of a law keeping up his price on a calculation of a ten years' average, without the iron manufacturer having the benefit of the same consideration? (Hear, hear.) I ask the right honourable baronet, whether, while he fixes his scale of prices to secure to the landowners 56s. a quarter, he has a sliding scale for wages? (Cheers.) I know but of one class of labourers in this country whose interests are well secured by the sliding scale of corn duties, and that class is the clergy of the Established Church, whose tithes are calculated upon the averages. But I want to know what you will do with the hard-working classes of the community—the labouring artisans—if the price of bread is to be kept up by act of Parliament. Will you give them a law to keep up the rate of their wages? You will say that you have passed resolutions that you cannot keep up the rate of wages; but that is no reason you should pass a law to mulct the working man one-third of the loaf he earns. What are the pretexts upon which the corn tax is justified? We have heard in the first place, that there are exclusive burdens borne by the agriculturists. I heard one explanation given of those burdens by a witty gentleman who sits near me. He said that the only exclusive burden upon land which he knew of were mortgages. (Laughter.) I think the country has a right to know, and indeed I think it would have been no more than is due to this house, if those burdens, of which we have heard so much, had been named and enumerated. The answer I heard from the right honourable gentleman opposite was, that there was a great variety of opinions regarding these burdens. That I could myself have told the right honourable gentleman. As a law is to be framed and founded expressly upon these burdens, it would have been fair at least to tell us what they are. I shall not enter upon the subject now, but this I will tell the right gentleman, that for every particular burden he can show me pressing upon the land, I will show him ten exemptions. (Hear, hear.) Yes,



ten for his one. There was one burden referred to by the honourable member for Renfrewshire, which is the land tax. I am surprised we have not yet got the returns, moved for many months since, relative to the land tax of other countries. (Hear.) M. Humann, the finance minister of France, states that the land-tax in that country is forty per cent. on the whole revenue, and twenty-five per cent on the revenue of the proprietors of the soil; so, that in France, the landowner pays five shillings in the pound, while, in this country, you have a land tax of nineteen hundred thousand pounds, half of which tax is paid by the poor man; and after having paid this enormous tax, you call for a fresh one on his loaf to compensate you for the heavy burden, you bear. Ought we not to know what those burdens were when this Corn Law was passed? Let us only legislate, if you please, for the introduction of corn when it is wanted. Exclude it as much as possible when it is not wanted. But all I supplicate for, on the part of the starving people is, that they, and not you, shall be the judge of when corn is wanted. (Cheers.) By what right do you pretend to gauge the appetites and admeasure the wants of millions of people? Why, there is no despotism that ever dreamed of doing anything so monstrous as this; yet you sit here and presume to judge when people want food, dole out your supply when you condescend to think they want it, and stop it when you choose to consider they have had enough. (Hear, hear.) Are you in a position to judge of the wants of artizans—of hand-loom weavers—you, who never knew the want of a meal in your lives, do you presume to know when the people want bread? The right honourable baronet is the cause—yes, I say he is the cause of our present position, and, upon his shoulders will the people rest the whole of the responsibility.”

The opposition manifested much delight at hearing the responsibility thrown on the minister, who was assumed to have the power, if he had the will, to give the people bread. Cobden's quick eye had, no doubt, observed some of those who had lately held office joining in the manifestation, for, turning to them, he said :—

“I will now say a word to the gentlemen on this side of the house, who have such difficulties—such boggings and startings—(great laughter and cheers)—at the danger of giving an assent to the motion of the honourable member for Wolverhampton. I will say a word or two to the right honourable lord the member for London, and to my noble and right honourable neighbours as to the difficulties of conscience which they appear to entertain, about a total and immediate repeal of the

Corn Laws. (Cheers from the ministerial side.) I hear on this side of the house, in all directions an acknowledgement of the principle of perfect freedom in the trade of corn. (Hear.) But, there are some of my noble and right honourable neighbours who think that there should be a duty for the purposes of revenue. How can there be a duty for revenue which is not a duty for protection? (Hear.) The gentlemen who think that the Corn Laws ought to be repealed, but cannot reconcile themselves to their immediate repeal, are showing a very great sympathy for the few who are gaining, and vastly little sympathy for the many who are suffering. (Cheers.) The question is now drawn within such narrow limits as to depend upon these two points—are you, the landed interest, able to show that you are subjected to exclusive burthens? If so, then the way to relieve you is, not to put taxes on the rest of the community, but to remove these which bear exclusively on you. Secondly, are you prepared to carry on even-handed justice to the people? If not, your law will not stand—nay, your house itself, if based upon injustice, will not stand. (Cheers.)”

Mr. Ferrand followed Mr. Cobden, in a speech which kept the house in a continual state of excitement, alternate cheers from the protectionists and laughter from the free traders following every libellous and abusive sentence. Mr. Villiers somewhat subdued the impatience of the house when he rose to reply, and, after his speech, the house divided, when the numbers were :—

For his motion,..... 90

Against it, ..... 393

The division showed that the adherents of the late whig ministry had swelled the majority. There had been 349 votes against his lordship's motion, and there were 393 against that of Mr. Villiers. The accession of 44 was from the whig ranks.

The scene in a dissecting-room, described by one of our novelists, where the reckless students mangle the dead body, while they smoke their cigars and crack their coarse jokes, and practically exhibit their wit, by throwing portions of the “subject” at each other, is not unlike the House of Commons when matters of serious discussion are before it. During the debate on Mr. Villiers' motion,

the starvation of the people was the "subject" of much merriment to honourable members. Mr. W. Ewart had asked if Sir Robert Peel would have any objection to the appointment of a committee of inquiry as to the "peculiar burthens" on land, before proceeding with his Corn Bill? Sir Robert smartly said: "My answer is, that I have proposed a measure which will reduce the present duty on wheat from 22s. to about 10s., or something in that proportion. I hope the honourable gentleman will unite in passing my bill into a law as speedily as possible." Loud peals of laughter from all parts of the house showed how the wit was relished. Mr. Milnes was peculiarly fortunate in raising such laughs. When he said that Mr. Buller had appealed not only to the passions, but to the *appetites* of the people, there were loud bursts of laughter, as if it had been a capital joke against the argument for the repeal of the Corn Law, that the starving ought to have food. Again were the roars of laughter renewed, when he described Mr. Villiers as "the solitary Robinson Crusoe, standing on the barren rock of Corn-Law repeal." Those "merry descants on a nations woes," were in admirable keeping with the whole system of heartless legislation in a house that called itself representative of the people. When Dr. Bowring, to show that in handicrafts in which machinery was not applied there had been a great reduction of wages, took shoemaking and tailoring as illustrations, there was much merriment excited. He said that women were going about crying for work, and there was loud laughter; that women were making men's trousers for sixpence a pair, and there was loud laughter; that he saw thousands around him hungry and naked, and there was loud laughter; and when he asked what was to become of the women of Manchester, there were peals of loud laughter! The "hear, hears," recorded were about as indecent as the "laughter," every falsehood stated by Ferrand, of the cruelty of the manufacturers, was followed

by "hear, hear." Those eager cries followed every one of his calumnies, as if, even had they been true, it had been a good argument to say that the employed should be starved, because the employers were avaricious.

The following are the names of the members who voted for Mr. Villiers' motion, "That all duties on the importation of corn, grain, meal, or flour, do now cease and determine:"—

Aglionby, H. A.	Hall, Sir B.	Plumridge, Captain
Ainsworth, P.	Harford, S.	Protheroe, E.
Aldam, W.	Harris, J. Q.	Ricardo, J. L.
Bannerman, A.	Hastie, A.	Rundle, J.
Berkeley, Capt.	Hawes, B.	Schofield, J.
Berkeley, Hon. H. F.	Hay, Sir H. L.	Smith, B.
Blake, M.	Heron, Sir R.	Somers, J. P.
Blewett, R. J.	Hindley, C.	Stansfield, W. R.
Blake, Sir V.	Horsman, E.	Steward, P. M.
Bowring, Dr.	Humphrey, Ald.	Stuart, Lord J.
Bridgeman, H.	Johnston, A.	Stuart, W. N.
Brotherton, J.	Johnson, General	Strickland, Sir G.
Bryan, G.	Langton, W. G.	Strutt, E.
Busfield, W.	Larpent, Sir G.	Tancred, H. W.
Byng, Right Hon. G.	Leader, J. T.	Thornely, T.
Collins, W.	Marjoribanks, S.	Villiers, F.
Crawford, W. S.	Marshall, W.	Wakley, T.
Currie, R.	Marsland, H.	Walker, R.
Dennistoun, J.	Martin, J.	Wallace, R.
Duncan, Lord	Morrison, W.	Ward, H. G.
Duncan, G.	Muntz, G. F.	Wawn, G. T.
Duncombe, T.	Murphy, F. S.	Wilde, Sir T.
Dundas, A. D.	Napier, Sir C.	Williams, W.
Easthope, Sir J.	O'Connell, D.	Wilson, M.
Ellis, W.	O'Connell, M. J.	Wood, B.
Elphinstone, H.	Ord, W.	Wood, G. W.
Ewart, W.	Oswald, J.	Wood, Sir M.
Ferguson, Col.	Parker, John	Yorke, H. R.
Fielden, J.	Phillips, G. R.	
Fitzroy, Lord C.	Philips, M.	
Gibson, T. M.	Philpots, J.	

TELLERS.

Only one man in every six of the male adult population had a vote in the choice of members of Parliament; only

one member out of seven so chosen voted against a law to make the food of the people scarce and dear. To assume that the House of Commons really represented the people was thus an assumption that forty-one out of forty-two of the male adult population were in favour of the Corn Laws! With such proof of the mockery of representation—with such feeble result, in that house, of nearly three years of most energetic agitation, was it matter for wonder that many, in the despair of ever overturning selfish legislation while the house was so constituted, should begin to think that representative reform must precede all other reforms? The O'Connor chartists had held that opinion all along, and the signal defeat of the free traders was matter to them of loud rejoicing. Other thorough reformers—men, who, in earlier days, had been called radicals—men deserving the name of rational radicals—did not think that it accorded with either justice or policy to put down one agitation in order to exalt another, and they had heartily aided the anti-corn-law movement. The excellent Joseph Sturge, without slackening his exertions for the repeal of the Corn Laws, had originated the Complete Suffrage Union, and great numbers were glad to see, and to join, two movements, having the same practical end, though sought by different means. I was one of those who, promoting both, believing that the object of each would be best served by their being kept distinct and separate. I did not despair of the successful result of the anti-corn-law agitation. The teachings of the League, and the more stern teachings of intense suffering, had convinced at least one half of the community. It was true that the half of the people had only one-seventh of their so-called representation, but that seventh had all the argument on their side. There was but a small fraction of the house holding to the principle of prohibitory duties. Sir Robert Peel and his party, in supporting their modified sliding scale, almost went the length of asserting the doctrines of en-



tirely free trade. Lord John Russell and his party, in supporting their fixed duty, made free-trade speeches. Both parties were forced to take their stand only on the allegation that there were "peculiar burthens" on land, which required some equivalent. Then the conviction of one-half of the community that the repeal of the Corn Laws was a matter of absolute necessity was not the mere recognition of a truth. Everywhere men were up and active, determined to succeed. The anti-corn-law petitions presented during the session, up to the 2nd of March, were :—

For repeal,.....	630	petitions,	466,138	signatures.
For repeal and free- dom of trade.....	410	„	253,588	„
For repeal of corn and provision laws	1,718	„	749,750	„
Against proposed measure .....	123	„	71,279	„
Total .....	2,881	„	1,540,755	;

A simultaneous agitation in nearly three thousand places was a proof that thoroughly free-trade principles were not only widely recognised, but had led to prompt action. The country had responded to the call of the League. That body had gained confidence by its distinctly specified object and its singleness of purpose. To add to its one demand that there should be no CORN LAW, demands that there should be also annual parliaments, universal suffrage, vote by ballot, equal electoral districts, and payment of members—to merge one point in six, five of them inseparable and to be taken in all, or not taken at all; and especially to take into partnership, as it were, in the movement, a body of men, whose violence had disgusted even the most thorough of the radical party, would have been to abandon all the ground that had been already gained by the League. With these views, at the adjourned

Manchester meeting, held in Stevenson Square, on Monday, February 14th, at which ten thousand persons were present, and where one of the resolutions passed was for universal suffrage, I said:—

“We have opposed to us a very powerful body; we have opposed to us the aristocracy of the country, who, although few in number, are great in power and influence. We require our whole force to move them. We require a union of the people for that purpose. But, gentlemen, I should be the last man in the world to recommend any hollow truce, any union of the people which would require the least abandonment of principle on any side. I am not here to advise any one to abandon the agitation for the charter; on the contrary, I approve of the principle of the charter. I say to all chartists here,—‘Go on with your agitation—I bid you God speed; but, while you go on with the agitation for the charter, lend a helping hand—at all events do not oppose, the agitation for the repeal of practical grievances.’ (Loud cheers.) Gentlemen, we have all enough to do. There are three sorts of agitation now going on, and it is desirable that they should all go on. First, the Anti-Corn-Law agitation. You see what effect it has produced. It has driven the whig administration to the recognition of a low fixed duty. It has driven the tory aristocracy from an open oppression to a heartless sham. (Cheers.) There is surely some progress made, when you compel them to come down from the high horse of undisguised oppression, to take refuge behind an obvious sham and a mockery. (Hear, hear.) The reality is coming. (Cheers.) We are now on the right road, and seeing what has been done, I see great good in the continuance of the Anti-Corn-Law agitation. I wish it to go on, not only with unabated, but increased energy. Our principle has always been total and immediate repeal; and the League will entertain no other question. (Cheers.) Gentlemen there is another agitation—an agitation not amongst the unrepresented; for it is taken for granted that every man who is unrepresented knows that he has a right to be represented—there is an agitation going on among the electors to extend to the non-electors the principle of voting in the choice of those who are to make the laws. The agitation is headed by Joseph Sturge, of Birmingham, an excellent man, and worthy of the confidence of the electors; he does not ask the confidence of any other party of men, although he deserves the confidence of all. He is endeavouring, in this electoral movement, to bring all electors to the acknowledgement of the right of other men to hold that right along with them. I am sure there is not a chartist here but would be glad to see this movement among electors; for be it recollected that Mr. Sturge does not ask the

non-represented, but only the electors, to join in this movement for extending the benefit of full, ample representation to the whole people, without standing on small details, confident that these can be easily arranged, when all are on an equality of political privilege. (Cheers.) I am a chartist to the whole extent, although I do not exactly approve of the conduct of some of those who agitate it, or of the manner in which they obstruct Anti-Corn-Law meetings—but I am a chartist, and I trust the chartists will persevere in their agitation, because it is my full conviction, that to the charter, sooner or later, the whole community must come. (Loud cheers.) The League, in agitating for Corn Law repeal, mix up no other question with it. We are bound together by one common tie—that is the repeal of all taxes on the poor man's bread; and you will find there is great advantage in keeping it totally distinct from all other sorts of agitation. I labour to promote Mr. Sturge's agitation among electors, because I know that it is among electors principally I have any little influence, and I wish to use that influence in as moderate a way as I can, and, at the same time, in as firm a way as I can, to persuade my fellow electors to obtain for non-electors equal privileges with ourselves. It is my firm conviction that all will have to come to the charter, and the way to get the middle classes to come to it is not to ask them to swallow too much at first—if we can get them to agitate for complete suffrage, it will be easy to come to an amicable arrangement of the other points afterwards. I say this that you may not obstruct Mr. Sturge's movement. I should be sorry if any person should understand me, that, in agitating for that, I was opposed to the agitation of the charter—it is an exceedingly wholesome agitation, and I trust it will continue. (Cheers.) All I ask is, that we shall not run into a hasty union that never can be lasting, if it be had by any compromise of principle. Every man has heard that the duke—the great iron duke—the man who tells us we are not to have a repeal of the Corn Laws—that he, in his victories, which cost the country so much blood and treasure, and involved us in so much debt that these victories have been our disgrace, instead of being an honour and a glory to us—every one has heard that in those victories he has boasted of his English, Irish, and Scotch regiments, marching together against the common enemy, and becoming invincible by reason of their union, but he did not ask the English to mix themselves up with the Scotch, nor the Scotch to become amalgamated with the Irish, and thus to go forward pell-mell against the enemy, but he directed them to march forward side by side, firmly united without losing their distinctive characteristics; and in this way they achieved their victories. (Cheers.) I ask you to allow these three sorts of agitation to march along, shoulder by shoulder, against the common enemy—not quarrelling by the way, but all going

for one common purpose, for the recognition of English, Irish, and Scotch rights."

The new Corn Bill proceeded as satisfactorily through the Commons as its framers could wish, the amendments proposed by the ultra "farmers' friends," on the one hand, and by the half-repealers on the other, being very summarily, and sometimes with "much laughter," disposed of. On the 25th of February, Mr. Christopher's motion, that when wheat was at 50s. the duty should be 25s. had only 104 votes. On the 28th, Mr. Wodehouse made an unsuccessful effort for an increase of the protection to barley; and the same result followed Mr. Redington's proposal to give better protection to the growers of oats, and Lord Sandon's to give greater encouragement to British millers. On the 1st of March, Mr. Buller's motion, that when wheat was at and above 64s. there should be a duty of 6s., and Mr. Hastie's, that the scale of duties should be reduced one shilling annually, were also negatived. On the 9th, Lord Ebrington, after contending for a fixed duty, moved that the bill be read a second time that day six months. The second reading was carried by a majority of 284 against 176.

The third reading of the new Corn Bill was not moved until the 7th of April, in order that it and its twin measure, the new Income Tax, should march hand-in-hand. On that evening, Mr. Cobden made a motion, of which he had given notice: "That, inasmuch as this house has repeatedly declared, by its votes, and through reports of committees, that it is beyond the power of Parliament to regulate the wages of labour in this country, it is inexpedient and unjust to pass a law to regulate, with a view to raise, unnaturally, the price of food." He supported his motion with powerful argument, but none was elicited in reply. Sir Robert Peel said he had listened to the speech with great attention, but did not deem it necessary further to discuss the question; and he added, that the

resolution was as much against a fixed duty as against the measure of government. Lord John Russell said he would neither support Mr. Cobden's resolution nor oppose the third reading of the bill, his belief being that it would speedily be discovered that the sliding scale must be abandoned and a fixed duty adopted. The amendment had 86 supporters. Other amendments were rejected, and then came the motion for the third reading. Mr. Cobden entered a solemn protest against the bill, denouncing it as a robbery of the poor. The ayes were 229, and the noes 90, and then the bill was passed. On Monday, April 20th, the second reading in the Lords was carried by a majority of 119 against 17; and on Tuesday, Lord Melbourne's motion for a fixed duty was negatived by 207 against 71. Lord Brougham moved that all duties should cease, and had only four supporters.



## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE NEW TARIFF.

On the 29th of April, the new bill became law. In the following month, the twin measure, the sevenpence-in-the-pound Income Tax, passed the Commons—not without strong protests against its bearing as heavily upon precarious income as upon receipts from realized property—as a temporary tax to relieve a present emergency, but still remaining (1852), without reduction or modification. Of the £3,775,000, the estimated produce of the new tax, only £154,000 was calculated upon as the probable receipt from tenant farmers. While the object was to defend the Corn Law, the farming interest was represented as so immense, that all other interests must be taxed for its protection; but when a new tax was to be laid, the legislating landlords discovered that their tenants could contribute no more than a twenty-fifth part of the whole.

Another accompanying measure was received with better favour—a new tariff, by which there was to be a reduction of import duties on no fewer than 750 articles. This certainly was a movement in the right direction; but, while many admired the boldness of ministers in making so sweeping a change, many also wondered that a change so consonant with the principles of common sense should not have been made sooner—why the gross absurdity of

taxing, without any benefit to the revenue, should have been permitted to exist so long. The credit, so far as credit was due to any, was attributable to the published evidence and report of Mr. Hume's Import Duties Committee, documents which, as I have said in a previous chapter, excited very little notice when they first appeared. The measure, Sir Robert Peel said, would proceed on two general principles, first, of altering prohibition in all cases, and imposing only revenue duties; and, secondly, of reducing very materially the duties upon the raw materials of manufacture, and on articles only partially manufactured. Amongst the duties reduced were those on foreign woods for the cabinet-makers, and timber for the ship-builders, oils and extracts for the manufacturers, iron and metallic ores, live cattle, bacon, hams, onions, potatoes, coffee, salted provisions, cocoa, &c. Fresh beef, previously prohibited, was to be admitted at a duty of 8s. per cwt., and a great outcry arose amongst the graziers, although the supply would be confined solely to countries closely adjoining to us, and although articles of consumption which might be brought greater distances still were to remain heavily taxed, the proposed duty on bacon being 14s. per cwt., on hams 14s., and on salted pork 8s., while the old duties of 10s. on cheese and 20s. on butter were still to be exacted. The bill passed the Commons on the 28th of June, amidst loud cheering, the protectionists rejoicing that their interests had been so little scathed, and the free traders glad that something had been done in the right direction—something out of which more might arise.

But the price of bread rose in spite of the new Corn Law, an apt but melancholy illustration of the falsehood of the pretensions under which it was passed, as a measure of relief. "The famine was sore in the land." In June, authentic and heart-rending details were published of deep distress in Manchester, Huddersfield, Accrington, Stroud, Longtown, Prescott, Walsall, Ilkeston, Darlaston, Glasgow,

Paisley, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Birmingham, Mansfield, the Potteries, Holmfirth, Cork, Nottingham, Sheffield, Dudley, Todmorden, Beaminster, Edinburgh, Halifax, Mirfield, Burnley, Stalybridge, Nantwich, Knaresborough, Haslingden, Bradford, Dundee, Stockport, Ennis, Colne, Westbury, Carlisle, Belper, Wolverhampton, Oldham, Hyde, Bolton, Leicester, Forfar, and a great number of other places in the United Kingdom, agricultural as well as commercial and manufacturing. The council of the League, fully aware of the *danger* that might arise out of the great amount of unrelieved, but, by honest legislation, easily relievable distress, thus earnestly called for a meeting of deputies in London, again to represent to Parliament the deplorable condition of the country :—

“ The daily increasing sufferings of the people, the harrowing details of which are given in the *Anti-Bread Tax Circular*, cannot much longer be left without a remedy. Parliament is dragging on, apparently in utter forgetfulness that *multitudes are perishing* for want of food. The Premier has already hinted at a prorogation. This must not be allowed without another, and a strenuous effort, to bring the legislature to a sense of its duty. What is to be done? It has been resolved that a special general meeting of deputies be called, to be held in London, on Monday, 27th June—the place of meeting, Brown’s Hotel.

“ To this step we have been urged, not only by the *necessity* of the case, but by numerous and pressing communications from our friends in all parts of the country. We, therefore, intreat all the anti-corn-law associations, and every friend of free trade, throughout the kingdom, to be prompt and energetic in rendering their support to this movement, and in appointing deputies to the meeting. *The country cannot brook the delay of eight months which must elapse before another session of the legislature.* The question of free trade in food must—shall be re-opened before Parliament separates. **THE PEACE OF THE COUNTRY REQUIRES IT.** *The lives and interests of millions are trembling in the balance ; it is for our friends to say which way the beam shall incline.*”

Previous to the meeting of deputies, Mr. Hamer Stansfield, of Leeds ; Mr. William Rawson, of Manchester ; the Rev. William Roaf, of Wigan ; Mr. James Lees, of Saddleworth ; Mr. John Bright, of Rochdale ; the Rev. C. Baker,

of Stockport, and Mr. Dixon, of Accrington, proceeded to London, and made strong representations to ministers and to a number of leading ministerial members, in both Houses of Parliament of the appalling distress in their respective localities, and used urgent entreaties that some remedy might be applied before the prorogation of Parliament, and on the 24th, issued a letter, containing some of the more prominent facts stated in their private interviews, to be addressed to every member of Parliament, feeling, as they stated, that if they were to permit a single member to remain uninformed on so momentous a subject, they would be abandoning their duty, and incurring a heavy responsibility. In this letter they said :—

“ The great bulk of the people, the customers of each other, and of all the other classes, are becoming too poor to purchase, and thus they cease to consume, and profits are destroyed. Confidence no longer exists; trade is everywhere paralyzed; wages are rapidly declining; workmen are being discharged; poor's rates are fast increasing in the agricultural as well as manufacturing districts; private charity has subscribed nobly, but yields to the overwhelming pressure; peaceable men are made savage and desperate; the loyal and obedient are becoming discontented, disaffected, and revengeful; and society, in many parts of the country seems to be on the very verge of dissolution. The disease is admitted—it makes progress hourly. Where is the remedy? We believe there is but one, and that the abolition of every other bad law now in existence would not remove the evil, so long as that law remains in force which denies the people the right to exchange the products of their industry for food.”

On Friday, July 1st, Mr. Wallace moved in the House of Commons resolutions, of which he had given notice, to the effect, that the labouring and industrious classes had been suffering many privations and severe distress—that the distress was increasing—that the alterations in the Corn Laws and the duties on imports and exports, coupled with an Income Tax, which would add four millions to the burthens of the people, were not calculated to afford relief, and that the house ought not to separate until a diligent and searching inquiry had been instituted into the

unprecedented distress existing throughout the country, and an effectual remedy applied. This gave rise to a two nights' debate, in the course of which several members gave most distressing accounts of the state of the country. No division was come to, the second adjournment being to Thursday, when motions having preference over orders, the house proceeded to consider Mr. Bannerman's motion, to invest ministers with power to permit, during the recess of Parliament, the free admission of corn; which was negatived, there being 176 votes against, and 113 for it. Sir Robert Peel, in arguing against power being given to himself temporarily to relieve the distress of the country, said that if prices continued to rise, the duty on imported corn would fall to nothing. This was certainly true; but as the price of wheat must have risen 11s. before the duty came to nothing, it was obvious that the consumers would have to pay 11s. and the holders would receive 11s. more before the duty was nothing.

On Tuesday, July 4th, the members of the Anti-Corn-Law Conference met at Herbert's Hotel, Palace Yard. Deputies from each of the associations forming the Anti Corn-Law League, and from the very numerous branches of the Metropolitan Anti-Corn-Law Association, were present. Shortly before twelve o'clock, P. A. Taylor, Esq., of London, was called to the chair by acclamation. He said that the first part of their business would not be difficult. It would be no difficult matter to bring before the nation, the legislature, and the government, details of the intense suffering and misery which were overwhelming a large portion of their fellow subjects. They would have no difficulty in showing terrible statistics on that part of the subject—statistics harrowing to the heart of every man who had a heart that could feel. The next portion of their labours would be to show that the principal cause of these evils was the scarcity of food—a scarcity brought about by the operation of the Corn Laws. It appeared, however,



that the government entertained grave doubts as to whether the remedy for starvation was a liberal supply of cheap food. If they were suffering from nakedness, he wondered whether the government would doubt if a supply of cheap clothing was the proper remedy. They had a third duty to perform. If the government still turned a deaf ear to their representations, and refused to relieve the wants of the poor, they must return to their constituents, and tell them that they had made representations to the government as to their starving condition—that they had pointed out the means of relief—that the government had turned a deaf ear to their remonstrances—that they had nothing to hope—that they had finished their work—had performed their duty—had stated the distress and the remedy—that the legislature had refused the remedy; and it would be their duty then to say to the people, “ God help you, for he only can.”

Mr. John Bright then addressed the meeting. The alarming state of the country, he said, justified the assembling of deputies twice in one session, and he proceeded to give a statement of the distress, every particular of which would be proved before that meeting, and the proof reported to the public :

“ The distress was universal. If they went to Scotland they found Forfar, Glasgow, Paisley, in desolation. If they came further south, they would hear from a delegate from Newcastle that almost the whole of the working population were out of employment, and were living on the charity given out by the town council. He had a letter from Shields, in which it was stated that the trade was almost annihilated. In Lancashire many towns were actually subsisting on charity. Bolton and Stockport were in a state of desolation. In Leeds it was still worse ; there were 30 or 40,000 persons existing upon charity alone. If they went to Sheffield, he believed they would find that men were not possessed of one-quarter the comfort they had three years ago—men as able to work as any living, and yet they were driven to the lowest state of distress. It was the same in Derbyshire. He had seen a letter that morning in the *Morning Chronicle*, giving an account of the state of a place called Hinckley, in Leicestershire, and he would recommend all

to read it, as it give a faithful picture of the prevalent distress. Coming further south, in the agricultural counties of England the poor-rates were at this moment rapidly on the increase. They found in these counties the farmer who was paying £300 a-year, saying that he must reduce the wages of his labourers because of that great boon of the government which was to assist the revenue and commerce—because he would have to pay the income-tax, he must therefore reduce his wages. A gentleman had come up from Manchester with him, one who did not agree with them as to the means they proposed for the relief of the distress, and he said that the population of Somersetshire were living on charity. If they went on to that part of the country, they would find that 20,000 or 30,000 persons were now out of employment who were a short time ago in comparative comfort. In Ireland, they found that famine was stalking through the land, and that riots were taking place, men being killed by the police, merely because they endeavoured to obtain food. How, then, could they sit calmly by? Humanity, if nothing more, would call them from their homes. But there was a feeling of policy—their own safety and the safety of the country, were at stake.”

There was one remedy, he said, and that was rejected by the legislature. Much would depend upon the course which the delegates should pursue at the termination of their labours that week. He prayed that they might act wisely and firmly, that they might enable the government to see that the time was come when this question could no longer be tampered with—that the time was come when justice and mercy must take the place of cruelty and oppression—and if the government should still refuse to hearken, he for one trembled at the result.

Mr. Thomas Plint, of Leeds, followed, and gave a frightful account of bankruptcies and insolvencies in that place, followed by a great diminution of employment and wages :

“These failures had taken place among parties who were supposed to be perfectly safe—who had been considered hitherto out of harm’s way; and even among those which had yet stood firm, there was a nearer approach to insolvency than they dared to contemplate. At that meeting allusion had been made to the enormous deterioration of mill property—a deterioration then stated to be from 30 to 40 per cent. If mill property was now brought into the market, the deterioration would be found to amount to upwards of 70 per cent. He would relate an in-

stance to prove this. He knew a concern which had become insolvent; a question arose as to whether it should be worked or not; the mill and property were taken at a valuation of £18,000; it had cost between £50,000 and £60,000, and even at that decreased valuation of £18,000 it was now a doubtful point whether it would not be a bad speculation. Another important fact to which he would allude was the consumption of butchers' meat. The consumption of butchers' meat in Leeds in 1841, as compared with 1835 and 1836, had fallen one quarter in quantity, while in price it had increased 40 per cent. The diminution of the consumption of butchers' meat by the working classes could not be estimated by this fall. The middle and upper classes would continue to consume the same quantity of butchers' meat in 1841 that they did in 1835 and 1836, so that the average consumption of butchers' meat by the working classes could not be considered as less than one-half in 1841, as compared with 1835 and 1836; and the consumption was going on lessening weekly."

Three other delegates from Leeds corroborated Mr. Plint's statements, and, after addresses from Mr. Coates, of the Tower Hamlets, Mr. J. Scoble, and others, the meeting adjourned to next day.

Wednesday's meeting was held in the Crown and Anchor, the large room at Brown's Hotel being too small to accommodate the delegates. Letters were read from Lees, near Oldham, and Hinckley, describing the misery that prevailed. The Rev. Mr. Bailey, of Sheffield, said:—

"When he was requested to attend the conference he issued an address to the working classes, requesting such as were suffering from the want of employment to send in their names, ages, and number of their families, trade, and wages, in 1838 and 1842, leaving a column for whatever remarks they chose to add. In the course of four or five days he received 2,156 statements from working and unemployed men, who, with 150 exceptions, were all heads of families. He would not trouble the meeting with this statement, as it would probably appear before the public through some other medium. The distress in Sheffield now extended to every branch of its trade. He held in his hand a list which showed the reduction in the wages received by various operatives then, as compared with the wages received in 1838. He had selected for the comparison the year 1838, because that was felt to be the period of distress, and wages were then supposed to have reached their minimum. But he found, in looking over the list before him, that many operatives who, in 1838, were earning 20s., 25s., 30s., or more, were now

earning sums varying from 5s. to 8s. or 10s. He had inquired into the cases of 2,156 families, amounting to upwards of 10,000 individuals, whose wages had of late declined, and who were suffering under the pressure of severe distress. It should be observed that the decline in the trade of Sheffield was not owing to the introduction of machinery, because the manufacturers there employed very little machinery now, which had not been in use fifty years ago. In fact, the only important article of machinery in use in Sheffield was the steam engine, which drove their wheels, and which had been in use for nearly half a century. The distress in Sheffield could not, therefore, be in any way traced to the introduction of new machinery throwing various hands out of employment, as was alleged to be the case in other districts. The decline of wages was, of course, felt by the shopkeepers, because so much floating capital ceased to circulate among them. He had ascertained that in a number of cases into which he had inquired, there were £6,000 a week less paid in wages during the present year than in former periods; and that would give a yearly diminution of £300,000. All that money was withdrawn from the shopkeepers; and that accounted for the change in their condition. The poor did not in general attribute their distress to the Corn Laws, but to the influence of class legislation; and thousands of them looked to the charter as the only remedy for the evils under which they suffered. (Hear.) Machinery, as they had already said, was not the source of the evil; and there could be no doubt but that a repeal of the Corn Laws would tend greatly to diminish it. A gentleman in the room, Mr. Ibbotson, a man well known in Yorkshire and in Lancashire, had told him if the Corn Laws were repealed, he should be able to-morrow to find employment for 500 fresh hands."

Mr. Ibbotson, of Sheffield, corroborated Mr. Bailey's statement. Mr. Bonner, of Bilston, said that in the Wolverhampton district there were 134 blast furnaces; of these 62 were at the present moment idle: each of those employed 160 persons, and thus were 10,000 persons at present out of employment. There were a number of iron mills in that neighbourhood, which employed about from 200 to 300 hands each. The majority of these were now idle. The japan trade was in a dreadful state. One master was now working for 50 per cent. less than he had done three years ago; of course he could not employ the same number of hands, and destitution would consequently be increased. In that town there were at the present mo-



ment 130 honest labouring men breaking stones in the workhouse. A jeweller told him that within the last ten weeks he had purchased fourteen or fifteen wedding rings, which had been brought to him by mothers of families to procure food for their children; they were not pledged, but sold, because the parties had no hope of ever being able to redeem them. The general feeling in the minds of the working classes was of a most awful description. In Bilston and its neighbourhood there were twenty-nine furnaces; fifteen of those were out of work, and the number of unemployed in that town could not be less than 3,000. The workhouse was so full that the guardians were obliged to have beds made on the floor, and the old poorhouse, at Bradley, had been ordered to be repaired for their reception.

Mr. Taunton and Mr. Taylor, jun., of Coventry, gave an account of the distress in that city, and the forenoon's sitting was closed with an eloquent speech from Mr. Geo. Thompson.

At the evening meeting, the veteran Colonel Thompson ventured to predict that, as the agitation in the country went on increasing, government would find out that it had been wrong, and that the delegates were right. Mr. Dixon, of Accrington; the Rev. Mr. Lowe, of Forfar; Mr. Smith, and the Rev. Mr. Lustworth, of Leicester; and Mr. Ridgway, of the Staffordshire Potteries, testified to the extreme distress in their respective localities. In the course of the evening, a delegate said:—"Why should we hear these details of distress? We all know of its existence;" to which the chairman replied, that London should know of it, and every part of the country, and every man in the country should know of it; and certainly the statements were made widely public by the reports in the London newspapers.

At the Thursday meeting, the Rev. Mr. Ferguson, of Bicester, said that the best field labourers in his own



neighbourhood received about 6s. per week ; that was the average wages, including lost time. The condition of the poor in general was most painful to witness ; the privations they endured were incredible. On entering the house of a poor man, a few days since, he found that all that the family had to sit upon was a stone. There were no beds in the house, and the father of the family was without a shirt. On calling a second time, he found the poor woman, who was the mother of the family, pouring cold water upon mouldy bread ; and when he gave them a trifle, she thanked him, and said she had been praying all day to God to put it into the heart of some person to give them half a dozen potatoes to keep them from dying.

The evidence of Mr. Nelstrop, the mayor of Stockport, was important. He said :—

“ At the latter end of last year the distress of our borough had arrived at such a pitch that the charitable, and those that had it in their power, could no longer stand still and look on without making an effort, at least to mitigate the distress that surrounded them ; a public meeting was held, and a subscription entered into, and we raised amongst ourselves, and from gentlemen at a distance, a sum exceeding £4,000. I ought to state that we received a considerable sum from the Manufacturers' Relief Committee, in London. Since then the distress has increased, and none of the mills then standing have been set to work ; in fact, there is not the (I had almost said) least possibility, for our poor-rates have gone on increasing to such an extent that no man with capital and with a grain of common sense would come to a town like ours where the rates are likely to be this year eight shillings in the pound, almost on the rack rent. In April last, after being in operation thirteen weeks, and the funds were almost exhausted, it was found that we have distributed relief as follows :—Families relieved, 3,143 ; individuals, 73,314 ; average weekly income per head, 9d. 2-10th ; relief given in provisions, £208 8s. 10d. ; average relief per family, 1s. 3d. 2-3rds. ; average relief per head, 3d. 2 3rds. ; income and relief per head, 1s. 26-30ths. That committee have ceased their operations for want of funds, and *left on their books 13,161 individuals urgently requiring relief.* Since 1836 our poor-rates have gone on increasing to an alarming amount ; and, except there be a speedy alteration in things, not only will the working classes be all paupers, but the middle class, whom they are mainly dependent upon, will be paupers also. The reduction of rents of all kinds

of property is very considerable. In consequence of the distressed state of trade a reduction of wages is taking place almost unparalleled, and I fear must go on till the manufacturing population in the cotton districts are reduced to a condition from which they can never recover themselves. Gentlemen, is this a state of things that ought to exist? I am sure you will all say, no. I thought it my duty to come here and make these statements. I wish the country to know, I wish Sir Robert Peel to know, I wish her Majesty's ministers to know, that the inhabitants of our borough have endured their unparalleled distress with unparalleled patience. There is, however, a point beyond which human endurance cannot go; and unless some means are taken to relieve the distress of the poor of Stockport, I wish the country to know, I wish Sir Robert Peel to know, I wish the government to know, that I cannot, and will not, be responsible for the consequences which may follow from the present state of things."

Such was the nature of the details given at the conference, in successive meetings for a fortnight or more, copied into the London newspapers, and, with reports of speeches well adapted to rouse the country, read with deep interest in every one of the associations connected with the League, stirring them up to increased activity.

At the meeting last mentioned, a deputation had been appointed to wait on the Duke of Sussex, to request him to present the memorial to the Queen. In the evening, Mr. Bright reported that the deputation had been received by his royal highness with the utmost cordiality and friendliness. He appeared to think that everything wrong was not to be attributed to the Corn Laws, although they were the occasion of a great deal of evil, and he himself had always been strenuously opposed to them. His royal highness appeared to be exceedingly well informed on the subject, and it was evident he kept well up with the newspapers. He said he would do everything to further their object, and, if they wished it, would find a way of presenting a memorial to the Queen; but she could not give them a reply, as she could not constitutionally do acts of sovereignty but through the agency of her ministers. His royal highness expressed great commiseration

with the distress of the country, and they had come away with a much greater opinion both of his heart and understanding than they had before entertained. The Rev. Mr. Massie proposed the following resolution, and it was carried unanimously :—" That this body of delegates desire to convey to his Royal Highness the Duke of Sussex their most cordial thanks for the manner in which their deputation was received by his royal highness, and for the encouraging sympathy manifested with the object which has convened the present meeting." As the Queen could not be approached in person, it was resolved that the constitutional and responsible adviser should be so told of the condition of the country, as to give assurance that the representation should reach her Majesty.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### DELEGATION TO SIR ROBERT PEELE.

On Monday, the 25th of July, the delegates assembled at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, according to appointment, about eleven o'clock, and, proceeding thence in a body to Downing Street, were immediately introduced to Sir Robert Peel. About one hundred and fifty delegates were present, and a select number, it was arranged, should consecutively lay before the Premier the melancholy state of different districts of the country, and the objects and wishes of the delegation at large. P. A. Taylor, Esq., handed to Sir Robert Peel the following list of the gentlemen who were to address him :—P. A. Taylor, Esq., Mr. Ridgway, from the Potteries ; John Brooks, Esq., Manchester ; W. Ibbotson, Esq., Sheffield ; the Rev. W. Bonner, of Bilston ; Laurence Heyworth, Esq., of Liverpool ; Saml. Forster, Esq., of Stockport ; Edmund Grundy, Esq., of Bury ; Mr. Whitehead, of Leeds ; and the Rev. W. Lowe, of Forfar. The scene was a deeply impressive one, and must have been remembered by the minister till his dying day. The countenance of every member of the delegation bore indications of grave determination, tempered with the expression which arose from the reflection, that if that appeal was unsuccessful, millions were condemned to unparalleled suffering. The condition of the country was honestly, manfully, declared. The report, which I cannot

refrain from giving in full, should be read with an imagination of the deep solemnity of the occasion, and the earnest tones of the speakers, of the tears running down the benevolent face of John Brooks, and his broken utterance when he pictured the dying looks of the weavers of Manchester, and his sudden energy when he asked what government was for, if it did not relieve them ; and of Mr. Lowe's stern prophet-like and almost inspired denunciation of those who withheld corn from the people.

P. A. Taylor, Esq., said that as chairman of the conference, which had held its meetings in the metropolis during the present month, and which had sought that interview, he had to inform him that it was composed of deputies from all parts of England and Scotland, but principally from the manufacturing districts, and from several towns in the West of England. They had also with them a number of ministers of religion, who had been deputed by their respective congregations to take part in their proceedings. They had likewise delegates from agricultural districts, for though the late appeal made to national charity was declared to be for the relief of the manufacturing population, they were convinced that the pressure of destitution and suffering was not confined to that class, but was quite as severe and crushing upon the agricultural labourer in many parts of the country. They had come together to lay before the public, through the press, and before her Majesty's ministers, through him (Sir Robert Peel), the dreadful and alarming condition of the people in the various parts of the country from whence they were deputed. Had the amount of distress throughout the country remained the same as when the conference was held in London in February last, it was highly probable they should not, at so early a period, have again assembled ; but, since that time, distress had gone on increasing, capital had still further been diminished, employment decreased, and trade become more depressed ; the



hope that spring would bring some remission of the evils of which they complained had been most grievously disappointed ; and, they now stood before him (Sir R. Peel) without alleviation and without hope. The population was literally perishing by thousands—they were absolutely starving—the patience of the suffering people was nearly exhausted, and a feeling and temper beginning to be manifested which was ominous and dangerous in the highest degree. The deputies were convinced that the time was not far off when they would not be able to provide food for a large proportion of the population around them, nor longer stave off the outbreak and confusion which would inevitably ensue. He believed that on the part of the Anti-Corn Law League, that that was their last appeal, and their last attempt to avert those evils they so much dreaded. The peace of the country had been hitherto preserved by a last glimmering ray of hope, but when the deputies went back to their constituents, and told them that they had seen the Premier of England, and laid before him their state of wretchedness and misery, and that he gave them no promise and no hope, he (Sir Robert Peel) must be answerable for the consequences ; as for themselves they would feel they had discharged their duty, and it must then remain with the people to take their own course. They were well aware that with the present government, and with a large party in the legislature, the Anti-Corn-Law League was not in much favour ; but there was one thing more to be deprecated by them than its existence, and that was its dissolution ; for it seemed to him that nothing was more likely than that, hopeless of obtaining the demands of justice and humanity for an oppressed people by any influence they could exert, or any representations and appeals they could make, that extensive and wealthy and powerful association would cease to urge their own demands, and unite with that still larger class of the community who were striving

to obtain a thorough reform in the constitution of the House of Commons. He believed a large number, at least, of the League and its friends and supporters, would say they had tried every means in their power, in the present state of the suffrage, to obtain a redress of their grievances, and they had tried them all in vain; they must now join the ranks of those who were struggling for a radical reform in the representation of the people, convinced at length that the rights of humanity and justice could not otherwise be obtained.

Mr. Ridgway stated that he came forward at the request of a populous district, the Staffordshire Potteries, to state their situation and to relate their distresses. He did this with every feeling of respect to the head of her Majesty's government, and under an imperative sense of duty to those who had sent him. The Staffordshire Potteries had long been a rising and prosperous district, but its prosperity was gone, and it was sinking more rapidly than it had been rising. The manufacturers, the support of the population, were losing their trade, and, what was still worse, their capital. The traders and shopkeepers, for want of business, were, many of them, unable to meet their engagements and to maintain their stations; and the working classes, an intelligent and industrious class, were suffering under severe and unexampled distress. The manufacturers, unable to sell their goods, were driven to lower their prices, to limit their work, and reduce their wages. The working men had to contend with all this—with a high price of food, and with privations without a ray of hope. Their comforts were gone, their furniture was fast going, their clothes only told the sad difference between past and present days. Yet they had borne their sorrows with a fortitude not more worthy of commendation than of belief. Numbers of them had emigrated to other lands where their manufactures were in demand, and no Corn Laws to oppress them. And, he said it with infinite regret,

but a sense of duty compelled him to say it, that he had a near and dear relative, a true friend to his country, and a large manufacturer, who had determined that if the Corn Laws and the distress produced by them should continue, he would leave his native land and his valued connections, and transfer his capital and exertions to a distant and happier clime. Nor was it wonderful, when such names as Wedgwood, and other leading houses, indeed his own, and nearly all were suffering, that men should think of escaping the storm, and preserving their property from destruction! The extent of distress in that district was found in the diminished consumption of animal food and other necessities; in the falling state of markets, and the tolls derived from them; in the increased and increasing amount of poor-rates, and the growing inability to pay them; in the lessened number of those who have been accustomed to take sittings in churches and chapels; and in the falling-off of persons who occupied the free seats, because they had no longer decent clothing to appear in. Yes, and sorry he was to say, the very Sunday-schools were deserted by a great many of the children, because their clothes were threadbare, and their parents unable to replace them. And, said the speaker, I mention with grief, that in a district formerly remarked for its purity, there are to be found females, and not a few, who have resorted to prostitution to preserve themselves from starvation! The colliers, dependent on the manufacturers, are as badly off as the potters; already bodies of them perambulate our streets, and I will not say ask, but demand money or food; the bricklayers, carpenters, and others are without work and the means of subsistence, and it is impossible to foresee the issue, unless the government repeal the Corn Laws, restore the trade, and give employment to the country. The people want work rather than relief, and justice rather than compliments, or even compassion. So far as the manufacturers and the poor-law guardians are

able, they will do all in their power for them, but as the workhouses are filled the ability will cease; the funds will cease, and unless something be done to find employment and cheaper food, patience will be succeeded by irritation, and a struggle will commence, of which no man can see the extent and consequences. "Sir Robert Peel," continued the speaker, "with the continent we can do little; there the day is past, and our markets are destroyed, it is to be feared, for ever. Let me direct you to the United States of America. There is a boundless market, and a kindred population; let us take their corn as well as their cotton; let us, by free-trade principles, arrest their impending tariff, and secure their confidence and goodwill. If the government does not do its duty and free the people, they will try to free themselves; they feel they are not represented; they are arraying on all hands to demand their rights. A crisis is at the door, and unless Parliament comes forward with the relief that is demanded, and before winter adds its horrors to the existing distress, it will be out of our power to avert the mischief; and on those who have the responsibility will rest the consequences."

Mr. Brooks said he was a calico-printer, upwards of thirty-three years in business, and had for the last twenty-five years been an extensive shipper to nearly all parts of the world; he brought home in exchange for his goods almost every article that could be named, except corn; he had never brought corn, because he could never calculate upon the price; the sliding duty made it impossible for him to bring home corn. He had a large country trade, and employed five commercial travellers; this year he had not done half so much business in the country trade as he had done last year, and was, therefore, obliged to ship to a much greater extent than formerly. There was no demand at home, and he was compelled to get rid of his surplus stock by shipping to markets already overstocked. He instanced Rio, where, two or three years since, eight

months' credit was given; it was extended to ten, and was then twelve months, and even then uncertain, so that the shipper did not realize his returns for two years; he could not sell the sugar of Rio here, he was obliged to send it to foreign markets. The cost of the raw sugar delivered in Liverpool is 17s. 4d., or 1¾d. per lb.; the duty upon it is 66s. 2d., or 7d. per lb., making 382 per cent. upon the cost of sugar; so that, taking the time occupied in sending out the goods, the credit, and the fact that the sugar must be sold in a foreign market, he (Sir Robert Peel) would perceive that the merchant did not get his return for two years; but if the sugar were allowed to be sold here the returns would be far quicker, and the consumers of sugar would be infinitely benefited. His print works and a flax mill he worked himself. He had also two factories let, and had other property, to the value of £150,000, all dependent upon commerce. Sir Robert Peel would perceive, then, that it was not wonderful he should be earnest upon the subject. Why, he had been obliged, in consequence of the changes in the French tariff, to refit his flax mill with new machinery. The coarse numbers of yarn were, in fact, prohibited from the French market; and he was obliged to change his machinery so as to adapt it to fine numbers, with which the tariff did not so much interfere. He was one who subscribed £100 a year to the Anti-Corn-Law League, and it cost him at least £100 more. There were many others did the same. He had agitated the question almost in every part of Lancashire. He was one of the agitators of whom he (Sir R. Peel) complained—one of the most active of them. How could he be otherwise? If the trade of this country were not set free, he should never be able to realize fifty thousand out of his hundred and fifty, so that even as a matter of selfishness he must be an agitator. Everything he had was at stake, and there was no time to be lost about it. But in addition to this, the people were starving. He could



not forget the workpeople who had raised this capital for him—he had their interest at heart. The power-loom weavers of Manchester called him their father—they were dying of hunger—they had the look of men broken down and driven to their grave by want—they kept coming to him in crowds—they were with him every day—they were getting worse and worse—something must be done for them. The people thought government would do nothing for them; they could not see what the government was for, or what it was about; the people were starving, and it did not help them. He was a chartist now; he had joined the people, and he would continue to be an agitator till their condition was changed.

Mr. Brooks then handed Sir Robert a paper, showing the depreciation in value of 27 inch printing cloth, which he himself purchased. He bought it in 1834 at 9s. 6d. a-piece; he now purchased the same cloth at 4s. 9d. a-piece.

W. Ibbotson, Esq., brought before Sir R. Peel the case of Sheffield. He said that about five-eighths of the Sheffield goods were sent to America, but that our refusal to take grain had well nigh destroyed that great trade. The population was mostly unemployed—they were literally starving, and something must be done for them, and speedily. The increase in the poor's rates was enormous, and still progressing. He believed that the repeal of the Corn Law was the only remedy, and that its adoption would immediately revive the trade and turn the tide in Sheffield. Without it, he was convinced that entire ruin must overtake that ill-fated and suffering town. He implored the government to act in this matter before it was too late.

Mr. Laurence Heyworth, of Liverpool, said that it was supposed that the distress of which they came there to complain was confined to the manufacturing districts, where there was machinery, and to some few trades connected with them; but he could show that the evil attached itself also to the great commercial towns. In the

great emporium of commerce from which he came, the misery and destitution of the inhabitants generally were nearly as great as in the manufacturing towns. The state of one ward of Liverpool, perhaps the poorest, certainly would bear out that assertion. In the Vauxhall ward there were about 1,400 families last year; and out of that number four hundred had no employment at all, and four hundred more, on an average earned 14d. a week. His only object in coming there was a philanthropic motive of benefiting, if possible, a starving and unemployed population. The trades who were suffering most were those chiefly dependent on the poor, the shoemakers, tailors, and sempstresses. Their business was almost entirely gone, or their wages reduced to the lowest ebb. The poorer classes, from being unemployed, had no money to spend in even the most necessary articles of clothing. The Corn Laws operated most fatally on those trades which were not carried on by machinery. There was evidence of this even in London itself. A master shoe-manufacturer, residing in Southwark, who had employed from 100 to 200 hands per week, told him that in 1812 (before the Corn Laws) he paid his men from £2 10s. to £3 a week, and women from 17s. 6d. to 28s. a week; for the same work he now paid 12s. 10d. and 3s. 9d. Talk of machinery reducing the rate of wages indeed! What machinery was employed in making shirts and shoes? Or where was the steam power applied to the manufacture of trousers and waistcoats? Had wages fallen in any of the manufacturing districts equal to that?

Sir R. Peel (interrupting him) inquired whether the trade of Liverpool had fallen off?

Mr. Heyworth said there was a host of shipping unchartered, and likely to continue so, in the docks.

Sir R. Peel: Has the value of the exports from Liverpool fallen off.

Mr. Heyworth said that it must be evident from what he

was saying that the quantity of goods used at home must be greatly diminished. Dear bread, in consequence of its being dear, absorbed too much of the wages of the poorer classes to permit a market to be found for the goods exported abroad.

Sir R. Peel: Did I understand you to say that the exports had diminished?

Mr. Heyworth: The exports must be increased when the consumption at home is diminished.

Mr. Heyworth then handed to Sir R. Peel a pamphlet, entitled, "How does cheap bread produce high wages?" and this by no means decreased the anxious state of trepidation in which the prime minister had hitherto been, which was too evident, notwithstanding his wonderful command both of muscle and countenance.

The Rev. Mr. Bonner, of Bilston, gave a very alarming account of the physical and mental condition of the labouring classes in the iron districts from which he came. He could not say that he stood before the minister as the appointed representative of those who were out of employ and starving, for they had for some time past believed that all applications were hopeless, and that they must take the remedy into their own hands. He had seen the misery created by the want of trade, and had been very reluctantly constrained to leave the duties which he loved, and the people in whose affections he lived, in order to lay their case before those who had the power of granting relief. As a minister of religion, daily forced to witness the demoralizing tendency of the present distress, he earnestly implored her Majesty's government to adopt some prompt and efficient means of relieving the wretchedness which now everywhere abounded—wretchedness which, if suffered to continue, would most inevitably lead to desperation, violence, and insurrection.

Mr. S. Foster said he had been deputed by Stockport to state the distressed state of that borough, having had a

full acquaintance with it in consequence of his situation as chairman of the board of that union. He (Sir R. Peel) was well acquainted with their distress through the excellent report of the poor law commissioners, in February last. Since that time to the present the distress had continued to increase, and the means of relieving that distress to decrease; the ratepayers were in a very distressed condition, and such was the difficulty of obtaining funds, that some of those the best acquainted with the financial condition of the union could not see how it was possible to raise funds necessary beyond the present quarter; and if the board should be obliged to suspend relief, the consequences would be lamentable. He had had an interview with the poor-law commissioners since he came to town, and he had told them these things. The Mayor of Stockport had stated that he, as the chief magistrate of Stockport, would not hold himself responsible for the peace of the borough if relief was not speedily afforded. He had occupied the situation he held with the view of aiding the poor and poor ratepayers, and should for the present continue to hold it, except the want of funds should cause the operations of the board to cease. The expenses of the poor for three years, ending March, 1841, was £3,100 per year. This year it would, according to present appearances, be upwards of £9,000. The opinion prevailed that he (Sir Robert Peel) could immediately relieve the distress, and if he would only announce his determination to repeal the Provision Laws, that announcement would stay the plague; and it was the opinion of well-informed persons in his neighbourhood that relief would immediately follow. The mills only partially employed would be fully so, and those now standing would soon be at full work—prosperity would gradually increase, and it would cause them speedily to forget their sufferings.

Mr. Edmund Grundy, of Bury, said he regretted the pressing necessity which had given rise to this interview,

but rejoiced at the opportunity of appearing before an original fellow-townsmen, for the purpose of stating the distress and feelings that pervaded the town of Bury. He would not, however, enter into any detail of the wretchedness and distress that existed, further than that Bury, in the beginning of what was called the panic, suffered comparatively little compared with other large towns. Distress, however, had now overtaken them, and poverty and destitution now pervaded the whole mass of the population. The state of the poor-rates would be forcible evidence of this. In 1839, a rate of 10d. in the pound was levied; in 1840, 2s.; and in 1841, 2s. 1d., leaving a debt owing by the township of nearly £3,000. What 1842 might bring forth, time must determine; but he would just state what effect the universal distress was rapidly producing in the minds of the people. He need scarcely state the effect of the present suffering upon the labouring class. That might be inferred from the state of mind which destitution would inevitably produce in every case; but as to the shopkeepers, who are all rapidly hastening to utter ruin, he did not think there were ten amongst them who were not desperate enough to view any movement which the people might make, not only without alarm, but with sympathy and satisfaction. As to his own class, they were rapidly coming to the same conclusion. He was a man who had fought the world with some little success. He had had twelve children—had brought up nine to men and women's estate—his sons could all do for themselves; but let Sir Robert fancy the feelings of a father leaving unmarried daughters behind him, and the little savings of a life progressively diminishing. How could such a man step forward to uphold or support a government which refused to mitigate the sufferings of the people, or obviate the calamities that were now overhanging the nation? They complained that the land, which would grow, under any circumstances, one crop



a-year, was protected; the funds, too, were protected by the common honesty and great honour of Englishmen; the colonies were protected by the imposition of duties on the productions of other countries. But what protection was given to the toiling artizan, or enterprising and industrious trader? They were left to the pressure of a mass of artificial burdens, as well as to all the accidents and difficulties of natural events; and was it to be expected that, when the people were starving, he, or such as he, should not sympathise with any efforts, the most desperate even, that might be resorted to in the hope of relief? The depreciation of property in Bury and the neighbourhood was most appalling. A spinning and weaving establishment, which cost at least £40,000, was lately offered for sale, and only £4,000 bid for it. Another, which five years ago was sold for £23,000, was offered for sale, and not a single bid made for it; and one called "The Gig," which Sir Robert Peel would recollect, as his (Sir Robert Peel's) life was in the lease, though he (Mr. Grundy) had thrown it out, believing that his life would not be lengthened by his becoming prime minister, was declared at £15,000, and bought for between £5,000 and £6,000. They believed that he had the power to give them relief; and were he Sir Robert Peel he would do it, without regard to any party.

Sir Robert Peel inquired whether Bury was not under the New Poor Law?

Mr. Grundy said it was.

Sir Robert Peel: What is the extent of the union?

Mr. Grundy named the places included in the union, well known to Sir Robert Peel. The Poor Law was no favourite of his, and he begged leave to call his attention to its effect on the minds of the people. If he were a labouring man, and relief and redress of grievances were refused, he knew the effect it would have on his own mind, and therefore he deemed it unnecessary to describe

the effect upon theirs. He did not believe there were ten shopkeepers in Bury maintaining themselves by their business. One shopkeeper told him the other day that, out of 168 customers who had entered his shop, they had spent only the miserable sum of between £2 and £3.

Mr. Whitehead, of Leeds, stood before him (Sir Robert Peel) as a shopkeeper of that town, the inhabitants of which, together with those of every other in the West Riding of Yorkshire, were on the brink of ruin. Within the last six months, a great number of the principal shops in Leeds had been closed. Mr. Whitehead was proceeding with details of the wide-spread and awful suffering, when

Sir Robert Peel inquired whether the consumption of tea and sugar had decreased?

Mr. Whitehead believed the consumption of these articles had not been so much affected.

Sir R. Peel: Suppose it should have increased.

Mr. Whitehead said that the food of the poorer classes of the population generally consisted of bread, milk, meat, potatoes, cheese, and butter. The male part of them did not, except when obliged, take tea and coffee. What was used of those articles was of the worst quality and the lowest price, so much so indeed that the revenue was scarcely benefited by the consumption. But another fact might account for an increase, if such there was in the consumption of the two articles to which he (Sir R. Peel) had alluded. The men who still went to the factories had tea and coffee dinners. From the low rate of remuneration, they were reduced to subsist upon those fluids, instead of food of a more substantial kind, and the consequence was that they were becoming extremely haggard and emaciated. Vast numbers of them were dying gradually for want of food. One fact would speak volumes. A mill, which a short time ago had been worth £50,000 or £60,000, on being sold the other day, fetched only £18,000, and that was considered in the trade too dear. The

chartists were a powerful body in that district, and such was the state of the public mind, that if there was a movement for the destruction of property and dissolution of social order to-morrow, there were thousands who would not hold up a little finger against them.

The Rev. Mr. Lowe, of Forfar, said he was persuaded he (Sir R. Peel) had felt at the details of suffering and misery which had been presented to him. He would not unnecessarily add to that feeling by a renewed reference to those details; he could scarcely trust his own feelings as to what he might say in his presence on a subject so awfully important, and at a crisis so momentous as this. If he (Sir Robert Peel) had the heart of a man, it could not but be touched at the contemplation of the wretchedness, suffering, and want that existed in this country, and which had passed before his mind's eye. If it could have been possible for him to have been ignorant of the real condition of the country, he had now had submitted to him, solemnly and in the plainest and most faithful manner, the undeniable fact that poverty, starvation, want of employment, and all their consequent and concomitant miseries are at this moment prevailing, increasing, and extending, to a degree unparalleled in the history of our country for centuries past. Without entering into details, he might be permitted to say, in respect to Forfar, from which he came, and its neighbouring towns, that although they had not yet experienced the intensity of suffering which other manufacturing districts were enduring, yet the amount of poverty, want, and wretchedness which prevailed with them were more than sufficient to enlist the energies and call forth the exertions of every man who had a heart to feel and an influence to use, for the amelioration of the condition of his fellow men. Conversant he was with the poor and working classes of Forfar, by mingling with them, visiting them in their houses, endeavouring to comfort them under their deep privations by the solaces of our holy religion, to

tranquillize their minds under the most exciting circumstances, and procrastinate, if possible, the awful crisis of outbreak, which must and would come, if their sufferings were not speedily relieved. He thus knew their condition well. Their furniture had vanished from their now cheerless homes, piece after piece; their clothes were going in tatters off their backs, and shame and nakedness characterised multitudes of their honest and industrious community. But that was not all. While in this state of starvation and misery, crime and moral degradation must necessarily increase. The rising generation, too, were growing up without the means of education, except in one branch, a most fearful branch of education indeed, in reference to the rulers of our land,—our youth were trained to curse those laws which stood between them and the bounties of heaven in that munificence which God gives them. He was persuaded that he (Sir Robert Peel) could not but feel, standing as he did in the awfully responsible position of Prime Minister of England, at this crisis. Their youth were trained to hate those oppressors who had enacted, and who maintain those laws by which they are literally starved. They were trained to this by practical parental example; and it was not to be wondered at, seeing that this is expressly predicted in that sacred volume which they all hold to be the revealed will of Almighty God to man. “He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him.” He did not quote that scripture—a scripture which was being literally fulfilled by starving millions—he did not quote it to harrow up his heart, but, being the truth, he wished it to tell upon his mind, if so be that it might lead him to use that power which was in his hand, in order to avert from himself and his party the predicted imprecations of an almost desperate people. He pleaded only on the ground of justice in the sight of God, that you remove the starvation laws, and redress the just grievances of the people. They solemnly assured him that the patience of



the starving millions which he (Sir R. Peel) and others had repeatedly and well applauded, and on which they were still vainly calculating, was all but exhausted. Should that delegation break up, and should he cause the prorogation of Parliament without affording efficient relief, or giving them one glimpse of hope, the consequences, ere months passed, would be fearful and tremendous. They believed, and the country too, that he had the power—he could almost say the omnipotent power—to remedy the evils, and prevent the ruin which was at hand; and if he refused or delayed to employ that power, which his place and his position gave him, fearful would be his responsibility, and tremendous his guilt at the bar of Almighty God, at which he and they must soon appear.

The Chairman briefly added some statements relative to the distress in London, which, although not so great as in other places, was still becoming progressively more severe. The number of casual cases relieved by the City of London Union, from the 25th of December, 1838, to June 24th, 1839, was 888, at an expense of £628 6s., and the number of cases from December 25th, 1841, to June 24th, 1842, was 29,648, at an expense of £4,231 3s.

Sir R. Peel made the following reply:—"You will be aware, gentlemen, that as these subjects are being debated almost nightly in the House of Commons, I cannot be expected to communicate anything now. I shall, however, take care that the facts and statements you have laid before me are brought before her Majesty's government. I have nothing further to communicate"—then, after a pause, Sir Robert Peel added,—“except to express my deep sympathy in the distresses of the country, and to thank you for the testimony you have borne, *which I fear is incontestible.*”

Sir Robert Peel then withdrew. On retiring to Herbert's Hotel, Palace Yard, an unanimous vote of thanks was passed to the chairman, for the impressive and yet dignified



manner in which he had introduced the delegation to Sir Robert Peel.

Other deputations sought and obtained interviews with Sir Robert Peel and his colleagues in office. Public meetings had been held in Leeds, Leicester, Manchester, Huddersfield, Halifax, Lancaster, Bury, Bolton, and Salford, and gentlemen had been appointed to proceed to London to represent to ministers the alarming state of the country. No sooner, therefore, had Sir Robert been released from the disagreeable importunities, and the stern warnings of the Conference delegates, than those additional deputies came to disturb the quiet which he evidently sought. He was waited upon, by appointment, on Monday, July 25th, by the following gentlemen: Mr. Pawson, mayor of Leeds, Mr. Holdforth, of Leeds; Mr. Alderman Chappell, Mr. Alderman Brooks, and Mr. Robert Gardner, of Manchester; Mr. Ashton and Mr. Brook, of Huddersfield; Mr. Ackroyd, of Halifax; Mr. Biggs, of Leicester; Mr. Henry Ashworth, of Bolton; Mr. J. Walker, of Bury; and Mr. Holland Hoole, of Salford. Sir Robert received them standing, in which position he and they remained during the whole conference, which lasted two hours. The Premier was addressed by Mr. Pawson, Mr. Holdforth, Mr. Chappell, Mr. Gardner, Mr. Biggs, Mr. Walker, Mr. Henry Ashworth, Mr. Brook, Mr. Ashton, and Mr. Ackroyd. At the end of Mr. Ashworth's very bold and effective speech, the following brief colloquy took place:—

“ Sir Robert Peel: You will admit that I have diminished the protection to agriculture more than has ever been done within six months at any rate ?

“ Mr. Ashworth thought it was only a nominal alteration which had been effected by the Corn Laws; a duty of 13s. had been substituted for 23s., and six feet of water might drown a man as well as six yards. Neither would the tariff be very beneficial to the poor man; out of twenty-two millions of articles that it embraced, sixteen millions were left untouched; and the six millions worth that it did effect would not assist the starving operative. Did the poor man care for French boots and shoes, cosmetics, silks, and perfumery ?

"Sir R. Peel: It is rather shallow to say that the poor do not care for cosmetics. It must be recollected, too, that I have made a great reduction of the duty on the importation of meat.

"Mr. Ashworth said that pork was purchased, at Cincinnati, for 8s. a cwt., whilst Sir Robert Peel had imposed a duty of 14s.

"Sir Robert Peel: 8s., not 14s. I think we had better not discuss the tariff.

"Mr. Ashworth said it was no wonder if we imposed a duty of cent. per cent. upon American pork, that they should impose a duty of 35s. per cent. upon our manufactures.

"Mr. Ashton merely wished to refer to the great emigration that was going on from this country to America. The best, the careful, steady, industrious men, were leaving all the manufactories in England. He thought it was absolutely necessary that the good hands should be kept at home.

"Sir R. Peel: Should you say they went to America to invest what money they had in hand, or to get employed?

"Mr. Ashton: I should say to obtain employment."

Sir Robert's reply to the representations made to him was: "I shall take care to convey the facts which you have stated to the rest of her Majesty's ministers, and to solicit their attention to the subject." The deputation left him with the conviction that he would wait the chance of a good harvest and a revival of trade to allay the existing discontent. From him they proceeded to hold an interview with Lord Stanley, at the Colonial office, not with much hope of effecting anything with the man who, in the previous year, had assisted that under free import the single province of Tamboff, in Russia, would swamp all the wheat growers of England by its enormous annual surplus of wheat. His lordship told them that there was a great variety of conflicting opinions upon the subject. Mr. Chappell said that the whole lay in a nut-shell; one man had goods to dispose of and another had corn to give in exchange for them, and all they wanted was liberty to make the exchange; to which his lordship replied; "Oh, oh, so you say; but I am of a different way of thinking with many of you, and, in the mean time, let each enjoy his own

opinion." Alas! millions had no *enjoyment* in the opinion that they must continue to starve while food enough was to be had for the product of their labours, and they were forbidden to make the exchange. From the ungracious colonial office the deputation proceeded to Lord Wharncliffe, at the Privy Council office, where, after hearing their case, his lordship said that the distress was acknowledged, but there was a difference of opinion as to the remedy. Mr. Brooks, of Manchester, said he would soon find a remedy, but his lordship begged to be excused, and politely bowed the deputation out of the room.

On the following day, the deputation, with some accession to their number, waited upon Sir James Graham, the Home Secretary. The interview did not tend to impress them with a belief in his honesty of purpose. Mr. Horner, in a report on the number of cotton mills in the district of which Manchester was the chief town, at the close of 1841, had stated that a number of new mills had been erected. This fact, without reference to another fact that new mills were necessary to the use of improved machinery, had been, over and over again, reverted to by the supporters of the corn monopoly, in reply to the complaints of depressed trade; but the other part of Mr. Horner's report had been carefully suppressed, namely, that, of 1,164 mills, 139 were working short time, and 138 were not working at all. Nor had there been on the part of those who said that the *erection* of mills was a proof of prosperity any allusion to a part of Mr. Horner's report, where he said: "If the state of the market were such as to yield a remunerating profit on the produce of those mills they would be in full operation, and would, in that case, give employment to about 25,000 persons more than were then employed." If from a statement, made at the close of 1841, the supporters of monopoly dared to quote only a part, it might well be supposed that they would be shy, in July, 1842, in making allusion to new mills, when so many were standing still,

and so many hands were unemployed; but Sir James Graham, in utter ignorance or in utter recklessness, and regardless of the replies that had been published, actually reminded the deputation of the mills that had been erected during the previous five years, and requested to know whether several new ones had not been erected in Lancashire, and how that fact, if true, could be consistent with the almost total want of demand alleged to exist. Mr. Chappell said that, admitting that each of those mills were now in full work, which was far from being the case, as many of them had never been completed, and others went no further than the laying down of the foundation, they would only absorb at the rate of 500 persons to each establishment, less than one year's increase of the population, thus leaving the other four years' increase totally unprovided for. Mr. Bright repudiated making the question one of mills, or of Manchester only; distress prevailed more largely where there were no mills. Sir James, driven from that ground of defence, betook himself to another, not more tenable. He said he wished to know, if trade was so bad, how it happened that the consumption of raw cotton, by our manufacturers, was greater during the last six months than during the correspondent period of the previous year? The prompt reply by Mr. Thomas Ashton was, that they were *spinning coarser numbers*, and consequently consumed a greater quantity of cotton with the same labour and machinery. Mr. Ashworth having alluded to the increased rents and increased comforts of the landowners, Sir James suddenly and rather insolently inquired, whether he was to infer that the labouring classes thought they had some claim to the landlords' estates. Mr. Henry Ashworth, under some emotion, appealed to the deputation whether, in their opinion he had conveyed any such idea, and they all declared that it was utterly impossible that such an impression could have been conveyed by anything he had said. At the close of the interview, which lasted

two hours, Sir James remarked, in a manner more premonitory than he had any right to assume, even from his high office, that if any serious outbreak were to take place, in one week all the institutions of the country would be broken down, the rights of property sacrificed, and the labouring classes would be the greatest sufferers. Mr. Ashworth said that should such a disaster occur the sound portion of the community might be relied upon, and though the country might endure a severe ordeal, its industrial freedom would eventually be established. Sir J. Graham's fear and Mr. Ashworth's hope were both to be realized.

The deputation proceeded to wait on Lord Ripon and Mr. Gladstone at the Board of Trade. Lord Ripon, allusion having been made to the United States, said that the Americans themselves had a law against the admission of Canadian wheat. "Yes," said Mr. Bright; "and the carriers of that measure quoted our example as a precedent." His lordship declined to discuss the question at length. Mr. Gladstone asked if there was no symptom of improvement in trade, and was told that the distress, so far from being alleviated, was greatly aggravated; and so the conference ended.

It was obvious from these and other indications, that ministers were anxious to have the daily sitting Parliament on the other side Palace Yard soon dissolved. A good harvest, and some revival of trade might possibly stave off demands which were troublesome. But the members of the House of Commons were not allowed to separate without a reiteration of claims on their justice, and further tests of their faithfulness to their trust. On Thursday, 21st of July, Mr. Duncombe moved an address to her Majesty, praying that Parliament should be re-assembled with a view of an alteration of the commerce in corn, if no improvement should take place after the prorogation. He was ably supported by Mr. Brotherton, Mr. Mark Philips, Mr. Cobden, and Mr. T. M. Gibson. On the pre-



vious day the *Manchester Guardian* contained an announcement that there was some improvement in trade, much to the astonishment of Manchester people who had experienced none. A London merchant on receiving the paper said: "If Peel had paid a million of money for this account it would not have been misspent." Sir Robert did regard it as a God-send. With the paper in his hand he quoted from it triumphantly; a division was pressed for, and there were 147 against, and 91 for the motion. On the following day, upon the motion that the house should go into a Committee of Supply, Mr. Milner Gibson moved as an amendment, that it should resolve itself into a committee to take the distressed condition of the country into consideration. Mr. Gibson, Dr. Bowring, Sir J. Easthope, Mr. Hume, Mr. Fielden, Mr. Mark Philips, and others, gave fresh proof of the necessity of inquiry, with a view to instant relief. An adjournment was asked for, but Sir Robert Peel, all the other ministers remaining silent, being taunted with this silence, launched out into a bitter invective against the obstruction of public business, which drew upon him a bold reply from Mr. Cobden, who said: "The public business referred to was the voting of the militia estimates, to put down, he supposed, the starving people. He believed they might be better employed in finding them food. If a person had a malice of a fiend he would rejoice at the mode in which they were proceeding. The new Poor Law would not save their estates. Their present policy would create an amount of poverty that would break through stone walls. The people were now lying by the sides of hedges and walls, but when the winter came where would they go? If they were driven from the ditch-sides by the terrors of the bastiles, they would become banditti, or they must be put into the workhouse. Would the right honourable baronet resist the appeals which had been made to him, or would he rather cherish the true interests of the country, and not allow himself to

be dragged down by a section of the aristocracy? He must take sides, and that instantly; and should he, by doing so, displease his political supporters, there was an answer ready for them. He might say he found the country in distress, and he gave it prosperity; that he found the people starving, and he gave them food; that he found the large capitalists of the country paralyzed, and he made them prosperous." Sir Robert did say something to that effect—four years afterwards. On the 22nd July, 1842, the time was not come for a triumph over a selfish party. It was resolved by the votes of 156 against 64, that the distressed condition of the country should *not* be taken into consideration.

The Anti-Corn-Law Conference closed its sittings on Monday, August 1st; Parliament was prorogued on the 12th of August. The members of the latter body were released from the business of the nation in time to devote themselves to partridge shooting; the members of the former to carry into effect, in their several localities, the resolution they had passed, "to labour incessantly for the great object of the League—the total and unconditional repeal of the Corn Law, prepared to re-assemble at such time and place as the Council, in Manchester, might determine." They said that Providence had given plenty, but a few men of title and landed estate had opposed their mandate to the will of Heaven, and they asked, "Shall mortal man be more just than God?" A fearful state of things awaited both.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### FORMIDABLE TURN-OUT.

The League had hitherto been the preserver of the peace. While there was hope that its labours would be successful, the representations of evil-minded men that nothing could be obtained without violent measures, were listened to with mistrust; but when Parliament was about to be prorogued, after declaring that it would enter into no consideration of the means to relieve the acknowledged distress, that peace-preserving hope was destroyed; and, in their despair, people were willing to give attention to those who recommended violent proceedings, with the view of bringing matters to a crisis. It was represented that a great commercial convulsion, which should compel employers to join the ranks of the employed, would render the demand for the Charter irresistible; and that the means of obtaining that, through reform of the representative system, would also be the means of gaining a great advance of wages. The plan was, that every worker should cease to work; one absurd enough at any time, but especially absurd at a period when employers had so little work to give. It was not asked whence the advisers came, or by whom employed. In their wretchedness and hunger, men did not reason much. Besides, thousands being convinced that some violent proceeding was necessary, tens of thousands would be compelled to join them. Thus, the

outbreak, the almost universal "turn-out," came at once ; came, however, in a manner, which proved that the school-master had been abroad ; came not, as in former days, with attacks upon millers and corn-holders, flour dealers, and bread bakers, but with some reverence for law and regard to the rights of property. The deep designing wickedness of some, acting upon the despair of the multitude, originated a folly ; but the foolish would only go a certain length with the wicked, and there was reason to believe that the few instances of pillage that occurred was mainly the work of thieves and vagabonds, who had mingled with the crowd for that purpose. Another characteristic of the period was the patience and forbearance of those whose duty it was to preserve the public peace. Persuasion was preferred to the constable's staff, and to the soldier's musket or sabre. An emeute like that of August, 1842, over in a fortnight, occurring in 1819, would have occasioned a civil war.

The movement, originating in Ashton-under-Lyne, Dukinfield, and Stalybridge, was almost without violence, and simultaneous. All the hands in all the mills, 23,000 in number, turned out at once on the morning of Monday, August the 8th, and deputies from their body induced 9,150 in Hyde, and its neighbourhood, to follow the example. Oldham was visited in the afternoon by numerous turn-outs from Ashton, who, notwithstanding some resistance, succeeded in causing the operatives to leave most of the mills. On Tuesday, a body of several thousands proceeded from Ashton to Manchester, where, their arrival being anticipated, they were received by the military and police, but, on their declaration that they intended nothing illegal, they were allowed to pass, but were carefully watched, in order to prevent violence. Their demand, at various mills, that the hands should turn out, was instantly complied with—the masters, generally, giving their hands full liberty to do as they pleased. At Messrs.

Birley's mill, the doors of which were thrown open at their approach to allow the workers to go out, the mob insisted on going in, and, on being resisted, a number of windows were broken, and missiles thrown, which inflicted some severe hurts, and it was necessary that the streets should be cleared, which was easily effected. At two or three other places similar damage was done, but no attempt at the destruction of machinery was made.

On Wednesday, the business of turning out hands in the mills was continued; and it was effected with little violence, and where any was attempted, the ringleaders were seized and sent to prison. Numbers of idle persons crowded the streets, mingled with whom were bands of thieves, and in some instances contributions were levied upon the bread shops. The magistrates were constantly on the alert, and, with the military and police, succeeded in preventing the accumulation of any great number in one place. The mayor (William Nield, Esq.) issued a notice, cautioning persons against joining promiscuous crowds in the street; and a number of special constables were sworn in to assist in the preservation of the peace. Much alarm was of course experienced, but it was not very intense. There was a belief that the turn-out was not voluntary on the part of a majority of the workers, that that majority was proof against the recommendation of violence, and that the authorities, while firm and determined, were equally cautious and forbearing, and anxious that the innocent and the deluded should not share in the punishment due to the guilty and deluding.

On Thursday, the appearance of things became of a more alarming character. The disturbers were at work at an early hour in the morning, thousands being assembled in Granby Row Fields so early as half-past five o'clock, where they were addressed by several of the chartist leaders. Soon after six, the proceedings were suddenly brought to a close by the interference of the civil and



military authorities. Sir Charles Shaw led on a very large body of police and special constables, and a strong body of dragoons and rifle soldiers accompanied them. This force halted near Carpenters' Hall, close to the assemblage, and immediately afterwards, Major General Sir William Warre, Commander of the Northern District, came up with a detachment of the royal artillery and two field pieces. The Mayor, D. Maude, Esq. (police magistrate), Jas. Kershaw, Esq., a Borough and County Magistrate, who had accompanied this force, took up a position in front, on horseback, and the mayor read the riot act. Previously, however, to this reading, the mayor, humanely desiring to avoid as much as possible any resort to force, rode up to the hustings, and stated that the authorities had come to the determination, after what had occurred, to allow no such meetings as that; that they were not averse to the liberties of the subject being enjoyed to the fullest extent, consonant with the preservation of the peace; but they thought meetings of that description were calculated to excite and disturb the public mind. Entertaining this opinion, they held such meetings to be illegal, and were determined to disperse them. This announcement was received with manifestations of great displeasure by the meeting; but the riot act was read, as a further warning, in the face of this expression of feeling, and the magistrates withdrawing, and the two field pieces having been pointed in a direction to command the centre of the field, Major General Sir William Warre put himself at the head of the dragoons, and rode into the middle of the meeting. This had the effect of instantly dispersing it, and the dispersion was effected without the use of the sabre, and without any one being hurt.

Effective as this step had been in dispersing this alarming assemblage it was far from restoring the town to a state of quietude. The idle, the mischievous, and the dishonest were out, looking for their opportunity of plun-

der. About nine o'clock, in the whole of the south-eastern part of the borough, including Garratt Road, Brook Street, Oxford Road, and Green Heys, the shops were closed, and bands of from twenty to fifty youths were parading the streets, and knocking at doors to ask for food, and seldom went away empty-handed, changing their place of operation when any of the police appeared. It is due to the authorities to state that they were not idle. A body of 200 pensioners and ninety other persons were sworn in to act as special constables ; making, with those sworn in on the previous day, and a number of respectable workmen who had also been sworn in at the different mills, all anxious to preserve the property of their employers, a force of 1,000 men ; and strong bodies of these assistants were despatched, in company with parties of the regular police, to different parts of the town, where it was thought there was the most pressing necessity for their presence.

Things remained in much the same state during the Friday and the Saturday, violences being rather the exception than the rule, for the masters had generally closed their mills, with the determination to keep them closed until their workpeople voluntarily offered themselves, and the workpeople, generally convinced that no good could be effected by the turn-out, waiting the period when they could resume their employment without the risk of obstruction from the fiercer portion of their number. At the close of the week, 3,000 special constables had been enrolled, and the hope was entertained, that although in all the surrounding towns the process of turning out had been successful, with more of violence than had occurred in Manchester, there would be no very serious disturbance of the public peace.

In the commencement of the following week there were indications that the turn-out would not be of long continuation. Fears were entertained that Tuesday, the 16th, being the anniversary of the attack, in 1819, of the mili-

tary upon the people assembled on St. Peter's Field, would be the day chosen by the chartists for their retaliation. A public procession was talked of, and the presence of Feargus O'Connor was expected ; but if that was intended, he had caution and prudence enough to avoid the personal risk. A very numerous meeting, however, was held in Carpenters' Hall, of delegates from almost every trade in Manchester and in the neighbouring towns, at which a man of the name of Duffy, a chartist, complained of men who were leaguers one day and special constables the next. The following resolutions were proposed :—" 1. That this meeting pledges itself to *discontinue* all illegal proceedings ; and further, that they will endeavour to preserve the public peace. 2. That we cannot exist with the present rate of wages, and that we are determined not to go to work until we obtain the prices of 1839. 3. That each master do pay the same for the same fabric of cloth throughout the whole of the manufacturing districts. 4. That it is the opinion of this meeting that our political rights are imperatively necessary for the preservation of our wages when we gain them ; we, therefore, pledge ourselves to act with our other friends, and trades generally, in gaining the people's charter, as the only means of securing the said rights." The result of the deliberations was that 58 were for the people's charter, and would not return to work till it was gained, 19 would wait the result of another meeting, and seven who thought the movement should be solely for an advance of wages. There can be no doubt that this meeting tended greatly to lessen the influence of the leaders of the movement. Tens of thousands saw, instantly, the folly and the impossibility of remaining out of work till the charter was obtained, and earnestly desired to retire from the contest, more especially as the congregated masters had issued a resolution : " That the mills and other public works of Manchester and Salford be not opened for work, until the

workpeople therein employed signify their desire to resume work." The workers had been made to believe that the masters would be compelled, by the universality of the movement, at once to yield; but this non-resisting policy—this willingness to stand still, and at a period when standing still was about as profitable as working—was a thing that was not anticipated. An address from Sir Benjamin Heywood to the working men of Manchester was not without its effect in opening their eyes to the folly of their own conduct, for the time had come when the advice of respected men was not disregarded. The following address, from Mr. John Bright, was also greatly influential in inducing them to think deliberately upon the course they were pursuing:—

“ TO THE WORKING MEN OF ROCHDALE.

“ A deep sympathy with you in your present circumstances induces me to address you. Listen and reflect, even though you may not approve. You are suffering—you have long suffered. Your wages have for many years declined, and your position has gradually and steadily become worse and worse. Your sufferings have naturally produced discontent, and you have turned eagerly to almost any scheme which gave hope of relief.

“ Your fellow-workmen in Ashton and Oldham turned out for an advance of wages; they invaded your town, and compelled you to turn out. Some of you, doubtless, were willing, but many of you were reluctant to join them. They urged you to treat the men of Bacup and Todmorden as they had treated you. They told you that you had no courage, and that you would be unworthy the good opinion of your fellow-workmen if you refused to act towards others as they had acted towards you. You became an invading force. You visited the peaceful villages of Bacup and Todmorden, and compelled your fellow-workmen to cease their labour. You were regardless of the sufferings you were bringing on their wives and children; you relentlessly, and contrary to every principle of justice and freedom, deprived them of bread! You have had many meetings to deliberate on your position and prospects. An advance of wages to the rate paid in 1840, and ten hours per day, were the demands you were urged to make. But when the turning-out in this district was completed, and you had become evicted, these demands were abandoned, and you were urged to refuse to work until the charter became law.



"Many of you know full well that neither act of parliament nor act of a multitude can keep up wages. You know that trade has long been bad, and with a bad trade wages cannot rise. If you are resolved to compel an advance of wages, you cannot compel manufacturers to give you employment. Trade must yield a profit, or it will not long be carried on; and an advance of wages now would destroy profit. You have a strong case now in the condition of the colliers and calico printers. The wages of the colliers are not so low as those in many other trades, but they suffer, because they are only employed two or three days per week. The wages of calico printers have only been reduced *once* during twenty or thirty years, and yet they are now earning as little as any class of workmen, having not more than two or three days' work per week. If they combined to double the rate of wages, they would gain nothing, unless they could secure increased regular employment. Your attempt to raise wages cannot succeed. Such attempts have always failed in the end; and yours must fail.

"To diminish the hours of labour at this time is equally impossible; it is, in effect, a rise of wages, and must also fail. You can have no rise of wages without a greater demand for labour; and you cannot dictate what hours you will work until workmen are scarce.

"Your speakers and self constituted leaders urge you to give up the question of wages, and stand upon the charter. Against the obtaining the charter the laws of nature offer no impediment, as they do against a forcible advance of wages; but to obtain the charter *now*, is just as impossible as to raise wages by force.

"The aristocracy are powerful and determined; and, unhappily, the middle classes are not yet intelligent enough to see the safety of extending political power to the whole people. The working classes can never gain it of themselves. Physical force you wisely repudiate. It is immoral, and you have no arms, and little organisation. Moral force can only succeed through the electors, and these are not yet convinced. The principles of the charter will one day be established; but years *may* pass over, months *must* pass over before that day arrives. You cannot stand idle till it comes. Your only means of living are from the produce of your own labour. Unhappily, you have wives and children, and all of you have the cravings of hunger, and you must live, and, in order to live, you must work.

"Your speakers talk loudly. They tell you of your numbers and your power, and they promise marvellous results *if you will but be firm*. They deceive you; perhaps they are themselves deceived. Some of them contrive to live on this deception, and some are content with the glory of their leadership. They flatter you grossly, and they as grossly calumniate your employers. They pretend to be working out your



political freedom; they know that *that* freedom can only be obtained through the electoral body and the middle classes, and yet they incessantly abuse the parties whom it is your interest to conciliate and convince. For four years past they have held before your eyes an object *at present* unattainable, and they have urged you to pursue it; they have laboured incessantly to prevent you from following any practical object. They have vilified the substance and extolled the shadow. They have striven continually to exasperate you against those who alone will or can aid you to overturn the usurpations of the aristocracy. They have succeeded in creating suspicion and dissension, and upon that dissension many of them have lived. They have done their utmost to perpetuate *your* seven or eight shillings per week, and by their labours in that cause *they* have enjoyed an income of three or four times that amount.

"My fellow-townsmen,—You have been in a fever during this week. Your conduct, unopposed as you have been, has been peaceable, and such as my intimate knowledge of you led me to expect from you. We are all liable to err; you have committed an error, but it is not a fatal one—it may be retrieved. I believe you to be intelligent men, or I would not address you. As intelligent men you know you cannot remain out; you cannot permanently raise wages by force; you cannot get the charter *now*. What are you to do then? RETURN TO YOUR EMPLOYMENT. It is more noble to confess your error than to persist in it, and the giving up of an error brings you nearer the truth. When you resume your labour do not give up the hope of political improvement—that would be even more to be deplored than your present movement. Cherish it still—a brighter day will come—and you and your children will yet enjoy it. Your first step to entire freedom must be *commercial* freedom—freedom of industry. We must put an end to the partial famine which is destroying trade, the demand for your labour, your wages, your comforts, and your independence. The aristocracy regard the Anti-Corn-Law League as their greatest enemy. That which is the greatest enemy of the remorseless aristocracy of Britain must almost of necessity be your firmest friend. Every man who tells you to support the Corn Law is your enemy—every man who hastens, by a single hour, the abolition of the Corn Law, shortens by so much the duration of your sufferings. Whilst that inhuman law exists your wages must decline. When it is abolished, and not till then, they will rise.

"If every employer and workman in the kingdom were to swear on his bended knees that wages should not fall, they would assuredly fall if the Corn Law continues. No power on earth can maintain your wages at their present rate if the Corn Law be not repealed. You may doubt this now, but consider the past I beseech you—what the past tells

you the future will confirm. You may not thank me for thus addressing you, but, nevertheless, I am your friend. Your own class does not include a man more sincerely anxious than I am to obtain for you both industrial and political freedom. You have found me on all occasions, if a feeble, yet an honest and zealous defender; and I trust in *this*, time will work no change in me. My heart sympathizes deeply in your sufferings. I believe I know whence they mainly spring, and would gladly relieve them. I would willingly become poor if that would make you comfortable and happy.

"I now conclude. I ask only the exercise of your reason. If possible lay aside prejudices, and you will decide wisely.

"To such of you as have been employed at the mills with which I am connected, I may add that as soon as you are disposed to resume your work, the doors shall be open to you. I invite you to come, and you shall be treated as, I trust, you have ever been—as I would ever wish you to treat me.—I am, with all sincerity, your friend,

"JOHN BRIGHT."

The movement in other places was attended by less regard to life and property than was shown by the working men of Manchester and its neighbourhood. Miss Harriet Martineau says: "The chartists had got into the hands of protectionist guides or agents, had broke in upon free-trade meetings, and denounced free trade in corn, and stirred up precisely those among the working classes who were suffering least—the pitmen of the coal districts and the Welsh miners. There were riots of nailers and miners at Dudley and Stourbridge, and tumult over the whole district, requiring the active services of the military. The rioters resisted a reduction of wages, and hustled some of the masters; as did other rioters in Wales, where a gentleman of property had a narrow escape with his life. In the Potteries, a force of 6,000 malcontents, spread over an extent of seven miles, and occasionally committing violence on recusant masters and men, kept Staffordshire in alarm. Troops were encamped on the Potteries race-course, and magistrates tried to conciliate and mediate, but with little effect. \* \* \* \* \* The rioters sent bodies of men to the Yorkshire towns; and sometimes letters—laconic and

significant—detailing progress, and one ending with ‘We got plenty to eat; the shops are open; they give us what we want.’ Some disturbances ensued; but nothing so formidable as in Lancashire and in the Potteries, where now the malcontents were gutting and burning dwelling houses. In the midst of their violence, they gave a lame clergyman ‘ten minutes’ law to walk away, but refused the entreaties of a lady that they would spare the house, leaving her to be thankful for personal safety. Three men were shot dead by the soldiery, at Burslem, and several were wounded. \* \* \* \* \* In a very short time, the chartist strangers, dropping in from a distance, showed a depth of design and a rapacity which disgusted the Lancashire operatives; and the disorder subsided gradually through the last weeks of August and the beginning of September.”

In my paper, of the 20th of August, I made the following remarks:—“We have had another week’s almost total cessation of business; but while the insurrection, as it has been called, has been rapidly extending, and in many instances has had the melancholy accompaniments of the loss of life and the destruction of property, here, and in the immediately-surrounding large towns and populous intervening villages, which unitedly contain a population of three quarters of a million, the extraordinary tranquillity remarked upon in our last publication still continues; and while, at a distance, Manchester is thought to be in a state of siege, the whole town may be traversed without a single act of violence being witnessed, and the most timid female may go out at all hours of the day, without the slightest chance of receiving an insult. What an honour this to the longsuffering working men of Manchester! What a strange spectacle this, when the fiat of the multitude settles whether this man shall work or that man shall not, and when a quarter of a million of persons, unemployed, might spread havoc and confusion all around.

Here is the law in one instance set at complete defiance, and a new law of the multitude in full force—that none shall work without their consent; and yet, with this evidence of supremacy, there is the full and tranquilising conviction in the minds of all other classes that their lives and property are perfectly safe in the hands of a population, which, except in its wild sense of justice with regard to the means of obtaining a better reward for labour, or a fuller representation in Parliament, pays the most punctilious regard to law and order. The conduct of the people of Paris, during the three days' struggle, lauded, and deservedly lauded, as it was, falls infinitely short in forbearance and noble mindedness to that of the people of Manchester and its neighbourhood in this fortnight's formidable contest.

“Has there been one single instance of the destruction of machinery? Bands of men have gone to a factory and ordered the hands to be turned out, and on compliance have gone away without doing damage to the amount of one farthing; and denial has occasioned little more than the demolition of panes of glass. In other instances a stop has been put to work in the briefest and easiest way. There is a plug in every boiler driven from within; and so well known is the position of every plug, that in one instant it is found, and in another moment driven in, letting the water out on the fire. The object has been not to destroy, but simply to stop; and the simplest and least destructive manner has been chosen. Notwithstanding all that has been said by noble lords and most noble dukes, and by monopoly supporters, from Peel downwards to O'Connor, about distress being occasioned by over-production, accompanied by less demand for labour being occasioned by machinery; and notwithstanding all that has been said by Stephens and Oastler, about the ease with which machinery may be destroyed, there has not been a single loom or a single spindle touched. And



why? Because the people almost universally understand that there can be no over-production, while any of their members are deficient in clothing, and that it is not machinery which throws them out of employment, but that selfish legislation which prevents them from exchanging their woollen cloths, their calicoes, their fustians, and their cutlery, for the corn which abounds in other lands, and which, freely imported, would at once increase the demand for labour, and supply abundance of food to the half-starved multitudes.

“All honour to the intelligence and the virtues of men so acting. We must and do condemn all application of physical force to prevent men willing to work from earning their daily bread. We must and do condemn, and condemn most strongly, this interference with the rights of labour; but at the same time we must applaud, and most highly applaud, the rigid observance of the law, in all other respects, by men of whom it has been falsely said, that if they were in possession of power they would use it to the destruction of all property.

“And while we praise the working classes of our own immediate neighbourhood, let us also do justice to the other classes of our community. Never on any occasion have we observed more sympathy with the distressed, greater allowance for their breach of the law, or greater desire to see them restored to the comfort to be derived from receiving the due reward of their labour. We do not approve of all the acts of the magistracy. We think they have put forth declarations which can be justified only by the hurry and excitement of the moment. *But be it remembered that the sound of a soldier's musket has not been heard within twenty miles of Manchester.* Let this be remembered in connection with the reckless use of the military force in 1817 and 1819, and the middle class, and the partly popularly-nominated magistracy of to-day, will stand in advantageous contrast with the Hays and the Hultons of former days.



“Great forbearance on the part of the working classes having temporary power—great forbearance on the part of those who have the law and the civil and military forces on their side—mutual good will instead of mutual hate—a general disposition that labour should have its full reward—are there not here the elements of mutual agreement? And we here express our full conviction that a friendly conference between masters and men would, at once, put an end to the dispute so far as wages are concerned. As for the notion of standing out till the charter be obtained, is there one man in a hundred who believes it to be possible?

“The whig press is representing the turn-out as the work of the chartists, and the tory press boldly declares that it is directed by the League. Those who so write or talk are incapable of distinguishing cause from effect. The anti-corn-law agitation is the natural consequence of constantly-diminishing profits of trade, and constantly-diminishing wages of labour. Poverty has compelled investigation into its cause; and the conviction has been, that persons in trade, either as employers or employed, can never be prosperous while the law declares that they shall not receive anything from other countries in exchange for goods, but articles which are consumed only by the rich. And the chartist differs from the corn-law repealers only in this, that the latter wishing *instant* relief, applies to the powers that be, while the former sees no remedy for the evil but in a thorough change of the representative system. Both agitations are *effects* of the suffering produced by selfish legislation, *and neither can be put down but by the removal of the cause.*

“We need not reply to the aspersions thrown upon the League by the tory press. It has its own organ, and it can defend itself. We may, however, express our conviction, that, in this district where its character is known, and where its proceedings have been closely observed, no

honest man, of ordinary capacity, believes that either directly or indirectly, individually or collectively, have any connected with it, been, in the slightest degree, instrumental in inciting this 'insurrection,' unless it be by the incitement which must follow every forcible representation of a great and intolerable grievance. Does toryism stand as clear from the charge of instigating the people to violence?"

On Thursday, August 25th, an extremely crowded meeting of the Manchester Anti-Corn-Law Association was held, Mr. George Wilson in the chair. It was addressed at great length by Mr. Cobden, who congratulated the members that the question of the Corn Laws was settled in the House of Commons, so far as discussion was concerned. The deplorable proceedings around them were a natural corollary on the proceedings of that house, which had made the people despair of obtaining justice. He described the various efforts made during the session to procure a repeal of the laws which had occasioned so much misery, and, referring to the lamentable circumstances of the period, said:—

"What do we hear from the guilty authors and abettors of this confusion? Why that the Anti-Corn-Law League has produced it; yes, that we, who have been incessantly advocating the repeal of the Corn Laws, in order to give the people bread and employment, are the guilty cause of the people rising in insurrection for want of food and wages. This is the charge that is brought against us.' Now, gentlemen, so gratuitous a display of profligacy as has been manifested by the London press, and a portion of our press in this town, on this subject,—such a specimen of profligacy I believe never was equalled in the annals of the press. (Applause, and 'It never was.') Why, I should not, for the sake of meeting our opponents condescend to allude to it at all; but when you do see charges like this made against a body like the Anti-Corn-Law League, reiterated day after day simultaneously by a dozen newspapers; why our friends, even our dearest friends, might naturally say—'Surely after so many reiterated accusations there must be something in it.' And it is because I believe that some of our friends elsewhere, in spite of their experience of our conduct here, may by these reiterated accusations be led to doubt whether we are not to blame in

this matter—it is, therefore, and therefore only, that I condescend to notice these attacks. (Applause.) And it is to satisfy them—it is to convince those ministers of religion, those ladies, and that numerous body of the moral and religious portion of the middle classes of this country who have lent us their assistance,—it is to convince them that we are not unworthy of their aid, that I alone would condescend to notice these charges. (Applause.) Now, gentlemen, I would venture to say, and if nothing else that fell from me should go forth to the public, I hope that this at least will do so—I will venture to say in the name of the Council of the Anti-Corn-Law League, that not only did not the members of that body know or dream of anything of the kind such as has now taken place,—I mean the turn-out for wages—not only did they not know, concoct, wish for, or contemplate such things, but I believe the very last thing which the body of our subscribers would have wished for or desired, is the suspension of their business, and the confusion which has taken place in this district. (Loud applause.) And I pledge my honour as a man, and my reputation as a public man and a private citizen, that there is not the shadow of the shade of a ground for the accusation which has been made against us. Why are those accusations made? It is with the desperate hope that they will inflict a moral taint upon the Anti-Corn-Law League. They cannot oppose our principles; for their own political chief has given up the whole question, and has avowed himself to be with us in principle; they cannot therefore denounce our principles; and from the moment that the prime minister declared himself a free trader—from the moment that he said it was not only best to buy in the cheapest markets where others took goods from us, but that it was best to do so whether reciprocity existed or not—(laughter and cheers)—from the moment he went that ‘whole hog’ in free trade, their mouths were closed; but still they had their dirty work to do; they must say something, and what so natural and so politic as that these miserable tools of a beaten, a vanquished party, should commence immediately to attack the Anti-Corn-Law League? Their only hope, their only chance now, is in impairing our moral influence with the country. That is the game. \* \* \* We have been lately charged with being in collusion with the chartist party. Now the parties who are charging this are labouring under the disadvantage of having themselves been working for the last three years to excite the chartist party against us—(hear), and by means not over-creditable, as we shall by and by, perhaps, have the opportunity of demonstrating to the world. I will not say a word upon that at present; but, by means which may meet the light, they have succeeded in deluding a considerable portion of the working classes upon the subject of the Corn Laws. And I have no objection in admitting here, as I have admitted frankly

before, that these artifices and manœuvres have, to a considerable extent, compelled us to make our agitation a middle-class agitation. I don't deny that the working classes generally have attended our lectures and signed our petitions; but I will admit, that so far as the fervor and efficiency of our agitation has gone, it has eminently been a middle-class agitation. (Applause.) We have carried it on by those means by which the middle-class usually carries on its movements. We have had our meetings of dissenting ministers; we have obtained the co-operation of the ladies; we have resorted to tea parties, and taken those pacific means for carrying out our views which mark us rather as a middle-class set of agitators. Now the parties who, by their manœuvres, their unprincipled tricks, their hiring of traitors, have, I will say, compelled us in some degree to make our agitation a middle-class agitation, have unfortunately drawn their own teeth in this matter, and cannot now charge us with being chartists. (Applause, and laughter.) We are no political body; we have refused to be bought by the tories; we have kept aloof from the whigs; and we will not join partnership with either radicals or chartists; but we hold out our hand ready to give it to all parties who are willing to advocate the total and immediate repeal of the Corn and Provision Laws. (Loud cheers.) \* \* \* It is not this or that political party—it is not this or that agitation which accounts for the present tumultuous state of the north of England; it is long existing causes, which are to be found in our own statute book. (Cheers.) There we must go for the causes of all the misgovernment and wretchedness found amongst the working classes; and we must pin them to this, gentlemen; we must reiterate this, and not let them get us on the wrong scent, and persuade the world that it is this or that temporary cause which has led to this state of things; we must go back to the great cause—the mischievous legislation under which we are suffering. (Loud cheers.) There is no doubt the object of our opponents is to divert attention from that cause; that one of their great objects is, if possible, to prevent us going on discussing the Corn Law, its objects and effects; and to put us on our defence for our supposed connection with these proceedings. Now, I say that I will never open my mouth in defence of the League on this ground after what I have said to-day. Let the League go on in their own course, agitating—agitating—agitating incessantly for the repeal of the Corn Laws. (Loud applause.) Gentlemen, you are strong in the country; you are stronger than you think in London. The middle classes in London are almost to a man for the repeal of the Corn Laws. (Applause.) You are stronger than you think in the south of England; you have strength in the rural boroughs that you are not aware of; and I will tell you now what I did not venture to say on a former occasion—that I don't think Manchester will



carry the repeal of the Corn Laws, but that we shall carry it only by making it a national question. (Loud cheers.) Therefore don't let the enemy make it be believed that this is a mere manufacturers' or cotton spinners' question: that is one of the enemy's manœuvres to make it appear that you are treating the whole country as if it consisted only of 250,000 manufacturers; there is not a man, woman, or child who is not as directly interested in the repeal of the Corn Laws as any cotton spinner in Lancashire. (Loud applause.)"

Mr. Cobden went on to say, that on the question of wages the working men must be taught that it is one depending on principles apart from party politics—that the question of wages is one which depends on the same principle in England as it does in America, Switzerland, in Russia, and everywhere else; and that if we had the charter next day, the principles which govern the relations between masters and men would be precisely the same as they were then :—

"I believe that the working classes here generally are of opinion that the intrusion of the chartist question has not been of any service to them in the question about wages. (Applause.) I believe they are quite disposed to discuss and settle this question apart from party politics. Then what will enable the master to give better wages? By getting a better price for his goods. And how is he to get a better price for his goods? By extending the markets. (Loud applause.) How can he sell more goods and thus give more employment to labour, except he can get an enlarged market, and thus meet the wants of the increasing population of the country? There is no other way. (Loud applause.) Our business is not to alter constitutions; we don't seek for chartism, whiggism, radicalism, or republicanism—we simply ask for an enlarged market to enable the capitalist to extend the sale of his goods and thereby to increase the demand for labour and augment the rate of wages. (Applause.) This is a time, gentlemen, when I hope masters and men will meet and discuss this subject apart from party politics. (Applause.) The time is peculiarly favourable for this, and I think, notwithstanding the lamentable circumstances, the state of the public mind in this country, both with masters and men, will settle down into a more rational disposition to view this question apart from passion or prejudice, than ever it did before,—for I do think, gentlemen, that the present disturbances will leave less of the traces of prejudice or of resentment in the minds of the middle classes in this part of the country than



any former tumults ever did before. (Applause.) I remember, in 1839, when they attempted to stop the mills, and when I believe upwards of 600 persons found themselves in prison—I remember quite well that the feeling on the part of the middle class was one of unanimous indignation at that movement."

After alluding to the many concessions of principle on the part of the landed aristocracy, and the almost total abandonment of argument on the part of those who still voted against repeal, he expressed his astonishment that there were still manufacturers who did not see that their own interest, as well as the interest and welfare of thousands whom they employed, would be promoted by free trade in corn, and that *instant* relief would thereby be given :—

"Not a letter comes from America which does not state that they are overburdened with bread stuffs, that they have had a most bountiful harvest, and that they have a surplus of three million quarters of wheat, all of which might be sent to this country before next June. I received this intelligence in a personal interview which I had in London with one of the largest American merchants; and I saw one in this town to-day, who said that he was really thinking of letting his warehouse, or giving the landlord notice that he should leave it, but he added that he had a letter from his partner in America, by the last steamer, which said, 'If you could only get the Corn Laws repealed in England, we could send you plenty of orders.' (Applause.) There is this American merchant in England, his warehouses empty, and his presses standing idle; those presses could be kept going packing your goods for America, and the docks at Liverpool might be kept in activity in receiving corn from America, which might reach the starving mill-hands of our No. 1 district here, and infuse gladness and contentment into their bosoms. (Loud applause.) Gentlemen, our strong case at this moment is America; we must urge this on all occasions; if you meet with a sceptical, incredulous neighbour, who doubts that we could get *instant* benefit from the repeal of the Corn Laws, take up the case of America. (Applause.) It is no use, gentlemen, America opening her ports to us at a low duty; we cannot get any more trade from them unless we will take what they have to give."

Mr. Cobden went on to consider the condition of the agricultural population. The corn monopolists had stopped the outlet for their rural labourers, and the tide that used

to set to the manufacturing districts was not merely checked, but it was rolling back upon them a desolating tide of pauperism. He said, and he was soon to set an example in the course he recommended, "with regard to our future tactics, as we are rather a practical body, I should most certainly recommend that we pay a visit, as soon as the harvest is over, to the agricultural districts. (Hear, hear.) We shall be very unwelcome visitors, but no matter about that; we must go into the rural districts, and we must teach the people there that they have a common interest with ourselves in getting rid of these monopolies. We shall find enlightened friends in the agricultural districts in all directions; let us cultivate their acquaintance; and don't let us look upon this as a manufacturers' question. Low prices of corn are coming upon them; high rents, contemporaneously with low prices, will make them ready listeners to our lectures. Let us show them that, with a repeal of the Corn Laws, though they might no longer obtain high prices for their produce, the landowners would not have the power of extorting from them their present enormous rents, when corn had jumped down to 40s. a quarter. Let us explain this to the farmers; and let us show the labourers that they were better off with corn at 40s. a quarter, than they have been during the last three years, when it was 70s. Let us teach them these things, and let us do it in the spirit of kindness and conciliation."

Mr. Cobden's advice was followed. Soon after this period the question became a national one—and the movement was as much directed upon the agricultural as upon the manufacturing districts.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### TEACHINGS OF THE LEAGUE.

From the termination of the turn-out to the end of the year was one incessant course of *teaching* on the part of the League. There was the determination that until the next parliamentary campaign, every effort should be made to indoctrinate the people with the principles of free trade, and it was carried out with great vigour and perseverance. There were no parliamentary debates to be reported—no outrages to be given in full detail. The most interesting intelligence which the newspapers could publish was the proceedings of the League, which had its adherents in every town, and in almost every village. During three months there were meetings almost every week in the League Rooms, and the proceedings were fully reported, and widely and attentively read. Of these proceedings, I must content myself with giving a list rather than a sketch :—

Meeting of the Manchester Anti-Corn-Law Association, Sept. 15th, Mr. Wilson in the chair. Mr. Wm. Rawson said that when he was in London, he had observed a marked difference in the temper of the members of Parliament when the great question was before the house, and out of it the improved feeling was still more manifest; and the greatest anxiety was shown to know the real state of opinion in the country. Mr. Brotherton, M.P., acknow-

ledged the improved feeling spoken of by Mr. Rawson ; but said that doubts as to the justice of the monopoly would not soon overcome the selfishness of those who thought they profited by it. Amongst those were the clergy, who prayed for plenty and cheapness, but had a pecuniary benefit in scarcity and dearness. Thus, a clergyman, who, under the Tithe Commutation Act, had 200 quarters of wheat allotted to him, would have £600 a-year when the price was 60s., but would have only £500 when the price was 50s. The other speakers were the Rev. W. Shuttleworth and Mr. John Brooks.

Meeting of the League, in a large hall added to their premises in Newall's Buildings, 29th of September, Mr. Wilson in the chair. The principal speaker was Mr. M. Philips, one of the members for the borough. In the course of an able speech, he expressed his conviction that agriculture was yet in its infancy. The owners of the land, unprotected by import duties, must make up their minds to the same competition which the manufacturers encountered, and his experience as a farmer inclined him to think that the competition would induce them to bestir themselves, and that, by better cultivation and more economical application of labour, they would find agriculture better remunerative than they imagined. Mr. George Hadfield followed, and congratulated the meeting that Sir Robert Peel had so far travelled on the road towards free trade as to adopt a greatly improved tariff. The League had but to persevere, and they would compel him to include corn and provisions. A short speech from Mr. Brotherton closed the proceedings.

Meeting of the League, October 6th. The chairman, Mr. George Wilson, reported that England would be divided into twelve districts, and that a lecturer would be appointed to each. Mr. Cobden said there had been a great deal of misrepresentation as to the fall in price of some kinds of agricultural produce, and with regard to the

low price which cattle brought, denied that it was occasioned by importation under the new tariff. He said :—

“The fall has been because the farmers’ customers have been ruined. (Hear, hear.) Why, I have made some inquiries on the subject, and I find that in Dundee, in Leeds, in Kendal, in Carlisle, in Birmingham, and in Manchester, the falling-off in the consumption of butchers’ meat has been one-third, as compared with what it was five years ago. (Hear, hear.) How is it possible that this great falling off in the consumption should take place, without causing a diminution in the price of the article? We, who are apt to cultivate our connections, to nurse our customers, to wish them well, and to be anxious for their prosperity, should take a very different view of the thing. If we find that our customers are declining, and that they have no longer the means to purchase, we know that we, as sellers, must suffer in consequence. The farmers have not learned that lesson yet; they imagine that they can be flourishing while their customers are ruined. (Hear, hear.) Now, at the Chester cheese fair I observe that there was a falling off of 20s. per cwt. on cheese, and the farmers said, ‘We have had Peel in the market.’ (Laughter.) Now, the absurdity of that is obvious, from the fact that there has been no alteration at all in the duty on foreign cheese. Yet in Cheshire the price of cheese, of butter, and of milk, have fallen; and why? Because their largest manufacturing town, Stockport, has been ruined, and is paying £7,000 a-week less wages than it did three years ago. (Cheers.) And with that fact staring them in the face, why should the Cheshire farmers go to Peel, or the tariff, for a reason of their adversity? (Applause.) But, I observe that the Duke of Rutland, at his meeting at Waltham the other day, denied that there had been such a decline in the price of meat, such a fall in the price of agricultural produce. Now, we must set his grace right. There has been such a fall, and his grace ought not to tell his farmers that there has not. Look at the government contract; there cannot be a better test than that. The government contract for the supply of the army and navy with beef has been taken this year for 20 per cent. less than it was last year. (Hear, hear.) This is proof sufficient of the fact; and his grace ought not to attempt to mislead the farmers, by saying that there is not a great fall in the price of meat. There has been a great fall, and we know the cause. Now, it may seem very strange that I should be here to exculpate Sir Robert Peel from the attacks that are made upon him by his friends, on account of this falling off in the price of meat.”

Mr. Cobden, after adverting strongly to the impolicy of the American tariff, announced the intention of the League



to carry on the campaign with great additional vigour. It was spending £100 a-week in its work of instructing the country—he thought there was a necessity of spending ten times as much, at least, during the winter months, and of continuing it while the Corn Law remained unrepealed. “What,” he asked, “is the conduct of our countrymen in reference to the more inglorious struggles by sea or land?”

“We do not read of our naval heroes lying by and allowing one ship or one regiment to have all the honour of the victory; they lay themselves up alongside the enemy, and are anxious, as far as they can, to be in the van of the battle. And so I say in reference to Leeds, Glasgow, Birmingham, and the rest; let us offer them that honourable position alongside us in the strife. Manchester has no desire to arrogate to itself all the honour in this matter; and I believe there is, at this moment, a great desire on the part of these places to co-operate with us cordially, as far as we may invite them to do so. Gentlemen, the first consideration is the sinews of war; money is wanted to carry on this conflict, as it should be carried on, for the next six months. I know that our friend in the chair has got a project (you will be startled when I tell you of it) by which he intends to subsidize the country to the extent of £50,000. (Hear, hear.) Well, that is just a million shillings; we had two millions of petitioners for the repeal of the Corn Laws; where is the difficulty of getting a million shillings? Fifty thousand pounds may be raised by the League, if they’ll only tell the country that the money is wanted, and that it is wanted to accomplish our object by the beginning of the session of Parliament. I am sure that the money is wanted, and I tell you of it now, least you should be taken by surprise, and it should produce any ill consequences. (Laughter.) I tell you now that the chairman and council of the League are determined to raise £50,000 in the country. They’ll lay an assessment upon the country; and they’ll get the money, I am convinced, if you will only co-operate, as I know you will co-operate, with them. (Applause.) Why, ladies and gentlemen, all you want is, to have the opportunity of disseminating those stores of information which are now lying bound up in Parliamentary returns, or the productions of writers on this question; all you want is, that this information be disseminated, in order to insure the success of the question at the next meeting of Parliament. (Applause.) We want no force, no violence; we don’t want a single physical-force demonstration. (Applause.) All that we want is, that those more destructive weapons of the mind should be brought into operation,

in order to insure the success of this question in the next session of Parliament."

The meeting was subsequently addressed by Mr. Duncan McLaren, now (1852) Lord Provost of Edinburgh, Mr. Thomas Bazley, Mr. John Bright, and Mr. John Brooks ; all of whom expressed their belief that the proposed £50,000 fund would be promptly raised, so as to permit an expenditure of a thousand pounds a-week for twelve months, if the Corn Laws existed so long. The protectionist press affected to laugh at this as a vain boast ; and when the feat was accomplished, affected to believe that nothing but paper promises had been made, which nobody intended to pay.

Meeting of the League, October 13th, addressed by Mr. Cobden, the Rev. Charles Baker, of Stockport, Mr. L. Heyworth, of Liverpool, and others. After this meeting, the council of the League issued an address, from which the following is an extract :—

" Our aim has been to have no one individual destitute of the means of perceiving how injurious the taxation on food is to himself and the community. To the influence by which it is supported we have opposed the power of reason and the claims of justice ; and we have met by facts the sophisms by which it is palliated. For this end, not fewer than 2,000 lectures have been delivered on the subject of the Corn Laws ; more than five millions of tracts have been printed and circulated ; petitions have been presented to the legislature with millions of signatures, praying for the redress of the great wrong under which the country groans ; our conference, formed by deputations from various parts of the kingdom, has five times met in the metropolis to remonstrate with the executive government and the legislature ; the ministers of religion have met, in large numbers, in Manchester, Edinburgh, and Carnarvon, protesting against the demoralizing influences (which they had witnessed) of that policy which interferes betwixt man and the bounties of Providence. In combination with an extent of personal exertion, such as no merely political agitation could have called forth, an expenditure has been incurred, and defrayed, of not less than one hundred thousand pounds. And still, though much has been accomplished ; though the principles of free trade are rapidly extending themselves from our cities and large towns into remote agricultural districts ;

though we have seen the necessity of change, from being sturdily and contemptuously denied, become generally admitted; though the emergency has made it so obvious, that the defeat of the late administration for its proposition of a fixed duty, has been followed by the tariff and modified Corn Law of the present administration; yet still how much remains to be done before the monster monopoly sinks under its double blow, and before the words of the minister selected for its champion, that 'the nation's policy undoubtedly is to sell in the dearest and buy in the cheapest market,' become a legal reality and a practical blessing.

Further and increasingly strenuous exertions, then, are necessary to set the seal of final success upon the past. The very ground we have gained demands and inspires to redoubled effort. The pressure beneath which industry sinks is not heaved off; but the force applied has made it move, and perseverance will accomplish all. There must be more lectures, more tracts, more conferences, more agitation. Every county and borough elector in the kingdom must be personally visited, and a condensed library of evidence and reasoning against the Corn Law be placed in his hands. Monopoly will not yield without such efforts, and, it shall have them. We are entering on the fifth year of this struggle for truth, for justice, for existence. We ask of you to replenish our pecuniary means for sustaining it. Our appeal is made confidently, for the character of the agitation is sanctioned by its progress; and what is any outlay to the object to be gained? We have reported the amount already expended; and we now appeal to you to create confidence in our cause, and dismay in its selfish opponents, by enabling us to commence the ensuing year of Anti-Corn-Law agitation with a disposable fund of £50,000. We are confident we shall not ask in vain."

Meeting of the League, 20th October. The chairman, Mr. Wilson, having described the various means by which the £50,000 fund was to be raised, stated that it would be closed in January, when a great aggregate meeting would be held in Manchester, at which the subscriptions from each district town and village would be announced, and to which would be invited all the members of the Lords and of the Commons who had voted for a repeal of the Corn Laws, and many other eminent individuals, including ministers of religion of all denominations, with deputies and members of the League, from all parts of the kingdom. The meeting was addressed by Mr. C. Hindley,

M.P., Mr. James Acland, Mr. A. W. Paulton, Mr. Brooks, and Mr. R. R. Moore.

Meeting of the League, October 27th, very numerously attended, and very enthusiastic. Mr. R. Walker, M.P., after describing the state of the country, asked what must result from that state of things? "What we have seen will occur again—the disruption of social order, the magistrates of the district expecting momentary outbreaks, the peace only preserved by the presence of the military, our jails crowded with rioters, special commissioners in every manufacturing county, ships freighted with transports to the antipodes, and pauperism, instead of being the exception, will, if not intercepted, become the rule." Dr. Bowring followed in a speech of wide range, great eloquence, and most hopeful tone. After him came Mr. George Thompson, who spoke with powerful effect; and then Mr. Cobden and Mr. Mark Philips briefly addressed the meeting.

Meeting of the League, 3rd November. The chairman and Mr. Cobden gave favourable accounts of the progress of the subscriptions towards the £50,000 fund. The latter said: "An elderly person called on me on Tuesday, having the appearance of a country gentleman, and he put this paper in my hand, accompanied by a bank note: 'A landowner, possessed of several farms, subscribes £100 to the League fund. It is a money question, and the money speaks for itself. The subscription will be repeated, if requisite.' I never saw the gentleman before, and probably will never see him again. He did not wait for conversation, and I could get nothing more from him than: 'It is a money question; it is a money question; and the money speaks for itself.'" The meeting was then addressed at great length, and with much effect, by the Rev. W. H. Bonner, of Bilston, who taught, from holy writ, that it was advantageous to nations freely to exchange their various productions, and that, doing so, they subserved the



purposes of God. He was followed by Mr. Bright, who forcibly represented the necessity of taking immediate means to rescue the county and several of its boroughs from the disgrace of being represented by protectionists.

Meeting of the League, November 10th, addressed by Mr. George Wilson, Rev. Mr. Shepherd, of Bury, Mr. Buckingham, who spoke with the effect which had been produced in former days by his lectures on the East India Company's monopoly, Mr. Brotherton, whose plain and familiar illustrations much delighted the meeting, and Mr. Cobden, who informed the meeting that Mr. Buckingham had been invited to co-operate with the League—to "pursue the triumph, and partake the gale." He demanded NATIONAL co-operation, and said :—

"There was one plan adopted which probably most of them had heard of. The council of the League had, a short time since, advertised for prize essays, showing the injurious operation of the Corn Laws upon farmers and farm labourers. (Applause.) By the first of this month, the time limited, they received a large number. Three had been selected from that number, and, having had the opportunity of perusing them, he must say that he anticipated the greatest results from their publication. (Hear, hear.) One of them was written by a tenant-farmer in Scotland, paying £1,500 a-year rent, and he said, "I have laid out a large sum of money, which I expect to be reimbursed for, before the expiration of my lease, and yet I should be delighted to see the Corn Laws abolished before the next session of Parliament." (Applause.) Now, the League were going to print a million copies of each of these three prize essays. (Cheers.) He expected that in another fortnight every printing press in Manchester would be in full operation for the Anti-Corn Law League. (Hear, hear.) They were aware the Council of the League had arranged a plan, separating the country into districts, placing an authorised agent and lecturer over each, for the purpose of dispensing, as he had said before, not merely a tract, but a condensed *library*, on the Corn Laws. They had done a work in one county; they had the most of the kingdom almost completed in its organisation, and these prize essays, in addition to the other books, should be placed in the hands of every elector in the kingdom. (Cheers.) Now, the monopolists papers said they should not be able to raise the £50,000 fund; they said they might just as well ask a hundred thousand. Why, the fact was, the Council began to feel that the money raised would be



likely to exceed that sum. (Hear.) So they saw what a capital estimate they had formed of the spirit abroad. They had not waited for the country to respond; they said, 'We'll spend the money first—we'll put ourselves in pledge for it, and we'll trust to our bread-eating countrymen to take us out of pawn.' "

Meeting of the League, November 17th, addressed by the chairman, who announced that arrangements had been made to send deputations to a number of the large towns, Mr. W. B. Watkins, Mr. W. Harvey, the Rev. W. Roaf, of Wigan, Mr. Thomas Gisborne, of Derbyshire, Mr. Thomas Bazley, jun., and Mr. John Brooks.

November 24th. Addressed by the chairman, who gave an account of the progress, throughout the kingdom, of arrangements for collecting £50,000, and announced a subscription of £100 from Mr. E. Lombe, a landowner in Norfolk; Mr. Hickin, the secretary, who read a great many letters announcing movements, gave an account of the labours of eleven lecturers, and stated that the council had ordered 50,000 tracts to be stitched up with the magazines for October, 60,000 in the November numbers, and 120,000 in the numbers for December; the Rev. Mr. Hawkes, of Kendal; Mr. John Bright; Mr. Acland; Mr. R. R. Moore, and myself.

November 22nd. An important meeting in the Manchester Town Hall, attended by about 500 of the principal merchants, spinners, and manufacturers, machine-makers, and other large employers of workmen of the town and neighbourhood. Robert Hyde Greg, Esq., in the chair. The meeting was addressed by Mr. Benjamin Pearson, Mr. Acland, Mr. Moore, Mr. R. Munn, Sir Thos. Potter, Mr. Cobden, Mr. Bright, the Mayor (Jas. Kershaw, Esq.), and others. Thirty-six gentlemen were appointed to canvass for subscriptions to the £50,000 fund. Mr. Munn gave in his name for £250; the Mayor for £200; Mr. E. Armitage for £100; Mr. Thomas Ashton, of Hyde, for £200; Mr. John Brooks for £300; Mr. William Bickham for £100, and on behalf of his brother, £100; Mr. James

Proctor £100, and Mr. D. Proctor £25 ; Mr. Thomasson, of Bolton, for £100. The chairman then read from Mr. Brooks' red-book the following : R. Cobden and Co., £200 ; H. and E. Ashworth, of Bolton, £200 ; E. Shorrocks and Co., £100 ; Benjamin Smith and Co., £100 ; R. Hibbert, £100 ; Jacob Bright and Son, £300. Mr. Foster, of Sabden, then gave his name for £100 ; Mr. James Chadwick, of Eccles, for £100 (afterwards to volunteer £1,000) ; Evans and Nicholson for £50 ; Mr. George Howarth, of Rochdale, £25 ; Mr. Jos. Scholefield, of Rochdale, £50 ; Mr. James Wrigley, of Bury, £25 ; Mr. John Lord, of Bacup, £150 ; and the chairman £100, in addition to his annual subscription of £100.

December 1st. A crowded League meeting. Mr. Geo. Wilson, the chairman, gave a gratifying statement of the progress of the fund. Mr. Hickin noticed the receipt of letters from every part of the kingdom. Mr. Cobden gave an account of his visit to Sheffield, and, with Mr. Bright, to Huddersfield, Bradford, and Halifax, where great meetings had been held, and subscriptions opened with great spirit. He was followed by the Rev. Mr. Giles, of Leeds, Mr. Terence McCullagh, and Mr. John Brooks. The inconveniently crowded attendance showed that it was necessary to engage a larger place of meeting.

December 8th. The chairman reported that Mr. Bright and Mr. Moore had attended a meeting at Darlington, where £100 had been subscribed ; and one at Durham, where a similar sum had been raised ; that on Tuesday forenoon, a meeting of the merchants and manufacturers of Leeds had been held, and a tea party in the evening, at which Mr. Cobden, Colonel Thompson, Dr. Bowring, Mr. Aldam, M.P., had taken part, and at which £800 had been subscribed ; and that one had been held in Rochdale, on Wednesday night, at which Mr. Cobden, Mr. Bright, and Colonel Thompson were present, and a subscription commenced, amounting to the large sum of £1,350. The

meeting was then addressed by Mr. James Wilson, of London, Mr. Henry Marsland, M.P., Colonel Thompson, and the Rev. F. Bishop, of Warrington.

December 15th. Meeting in the Corn Exchange, capable of containing, part sitting and part standing, more than 2,000 persons. The chairman had again encouraging statements to make. At Blackburn, on Tuesday evening, a meeting had been held, at which £500 had been subscribed to the fund. At Bradford the subscription had reached £500. At Holmfirth, £100. At Preston a meeting had been held, and a subscription was to follow. On Saturday, Colonel Thompson, who had volunteered a month's services to the League, had attended a meeting, at Bacup, with Mr. Cobden and Mr. Moore. On Monday, Mr. Bright and Mr. Moore appeared as a deputation at a great meeting at Derby, in which Mr. E. Strutt, M.P., took a part. On Tuesday, a most influential meeting was held in the Friar Lane Chapel, Nottingham, at which merchants and manufacturers of the Midland counties' district were present. The Mayor of Nottingham and the Mayor of Leicester took part in the proceedings, and Mr. Bright stated the progress of the movement, and the uses to which the fund was to be applied. The sum of £997 was subscribed, increased to £1,335 at the evening tea party, which was addressed by Mr. Cobden, Col. Thompson, Mr. Bright, and Mr. Moore. The subscription was headed by £300 from Mr. Strutt, of Derby, and £50 from Charles Paget, Esq., the chairman, a landowner. On Wednesday, a large public meeting was held at Belper, which was addressed by Mr. Bright and Mr. Moore. In addition to these meetings, Mr. Wilson mentioned an important one which had been held in Glasgow, on Monday, called by the Lord Provost, which had passed a vote of confidence in the proceedings of the League, moved by Mr. Archibald Buchannan, who, some three years before, was disposed to dissent from much of what had been done

by the council of that body, being then in favour of a fixed duty, but he said that since that time he had rejoiced in the progress which had been made in pressing for unconditional repeal. After Mr. Wilson's gratifying statement of progress, the meeting was addressed by Mr. Milner Gibson, M.P., Mr. William Ewart, M.P., the Rev. Mr. Baker, of Stockport, and myself.

December 22nd. Meeting in the Corn Exchange, exceedingly crowded. The chairman reported that an influential committee had been formed in the city of London, over which Mr. Travers presided, and another at the west end, over which Mr. Charles P. Villiers presided. An important meeting, of nearly 2,000 persons, had been held in Hanley, on the Thursday of the previous week, Mr. Ridgeway in the chair, which was addressed Mr. Cobden, Mr. Bright, Colonel Thompson, and Mr. Moore. On Monday, a large tea party had been held at Bury, followed by a meeting, addressed by Mr. Cobden, Dr. Bowring, Mr. Brotherton, Mr. Moore, and others, and a subscription entered into which amounted to £800. A tea party had been held on Tuesday, at Bilston, at which Mr. R. R. Moore was present. On Wednesday, there had been a meeting, at Dudley, which was addressed by Mr. Bright and Mr. Saul. On the same day, there was a tea party at Ironbridge, Shropshire, at which Mr. Moore was present. Amongst other subscriptions received, Mr. Wilson mentioned one of £50 from the Earl of Radnor, and one of £50 from Earl Ducie. Mr. Hickin read letters, giving a most encouraging account of progress, and Mr. Isaac Crook stated that £1,850 had been subscribed in Liverpool. Mr. Brotherton and Mr. Cobden then addressed the meeting, the latter at great length, and with most encouraging effect.

December 29th. Meeting at the Corn Exchange. Mr. Wilson, in opening the proceedings, said :—

“Our friends have been as untiring in their exertions during the past



week as during any previous one. We had a meeting last Thursday evening at Stourbridge, we had another on Friday evening at Wolverhampton; one on Monday, at Colne; one on Tuesday, at Bradford; one last evening, at Burnley; and to-night, Mr. Cobden and other friends will be addressing a large meeting at Warrington. (Applause.) Next week there will be meetings at Bolton and Birmingham; and the week following will commence the great demonstration in Scotland. That at Glasgow will commence on the 11th, and I have great pleasure in stating that our excellent friend, Mr. Cobden, has had the freedom of the city of Glasgow voted to him by the Lord Provost. I rejoice that he has received this distinguished honour, because we all know that Sir R. Peel and Lord Stanley were not able to obtain such an honour at the hands of the men of Glasgow, when they visited that place. (Cheers.) I am also happy to state that the work of distribution of tracts is proceeding in several counties; we know it is successful, for we have evidence it is doing good in our correspondence. We have proofs of conversions having been effected by it in several quarters, where before we were met with open hostility. We have received subscriptions during the last week from men who never spoke of the League but in the language of opprobrium. (Applause.) I may also mention, and I do it with pleasing satisfaction, that the portion of the working classes who have hitherto hung back, are daily manifesting a greater disposition to join us, and I shall read a letter we have received—not the only one I could produce—as evidence of the fact:—

“ ‘Dukinfield.

“ ‘TO THE COMMITTEE OF THE MANCHESTER ANTI-CORN-LAW LEAGUE.

“ ‘Gentlemen,—We, the working people of Robert Ashton, Esq., Dukinfield, are much gratified to inform you that we have made a subscription for the furtherance of the great and glorious cause, the abolition of the Bread Tax; and we most cheerfully remit you the sum of £16 18s. 2d., resting assured that you will make the best use of it, by aiming a death blow at the most dishonest, dishonourable, destructive, demoralizing, and murderous laws that ever disgraced the statute book of any civilized nation—a law, which if suffered to exist, will in the end reduce the honest tradesman to bankruptcy and poverty, and his dependents to misery and starvation. But we anxiously look forward to the time when masters and men can take each other by the hand, with a determination to crush down that foul fiend, monopoly, in whatever shape it may be found, so that we may in future dwell together in peace, love, and harmony.—Signed on behalf of the above.

“ ‘GEORGE BRADLEY, Warehouseman.

“ ‘DAVID JACKSON, Weaver.

“ ‘THOMAS BOWKER, Dresser.

“ ‘Barn Meadow Mills, 27th Dec., 1842.’



The reading of this document was followed by great applause. The Chairman proceeded to say, that he had only a few hours ago had put into his hands a number of tracts, which showed the disposition of their opponents. They were almost entirely made up, he found, from the *Quarterly Review*, and intended for general distribution, with the view of counteracting the good sound doctrines which this League—(cheers and laughter)—had been successful in promulgating. He knew the parties who put them in circulation; he would not mention their names, but he would make them this offer, that as the League were delivering their tracts in all parts of the kingdom, if the monopolists would pay one half the expenses, the League would willingly disseminate the monopolists' tracts with their's. (Laughter and applause.)”

The Rev. T. Pottinger, of Bradford, and Mr. Bright, addressed the meeting, the latter in a strain of argument, eloquence, and energy, that excited the audience to enthusiastic applause. He began by giving the following account of the meetings which had been attended by deputations from the League :—

“ I have not attended one of your meetings for four weeks; but I have had great pleasure in hearing of the progress which you have made. The room in which you met when I was last among you has, it seems, been found much too small for the numbers who weekly assemble to take part in your interesting proceedings; and you now occupy and fill this spacious building. (Hear, hear.) And from what I see to-night, and believe is about to happen, some time before long, probably you will have to remove from this room, and take possession of the immense pavilion which is now being built. (Applause.) I trust that if it should enter—I'll not say enter—but remain in the heads and hearts of the government of this country, to persist in the maintenance of the Corn Law, that we shall find, not 2,000 or 3,000 persons here assembled each week to denounce this law, and to hear of the progress of this cause, but that 8,000 or 10,000 persons will be found, in Manchester and the surrounding towns, each week to assemble in that pavilion, and to declare with their united voices that, whatever may be the opinion of men who are interested in the maintenance of this law, here at least are thousands who have resolved that it shall be repealed,—who, knowing perfectly well that they have justice and truth upon their side, are not deterred by the obloquy of the tools of a certain party, nor by the contumely that may be heaped upon them, nor by the frowns of the powerful of this

world, but are resolved to unite themselves with their fellow men, here and throughout the country, in declaring that this law shall no longer exist. (Loud applause.) During the four weeks which have passed whilst you have been so busy here, some of us have been not less actively engaged elsewhere. (Applause.) It may be interesting to the meeting, perhaps, to hear a list of a few of the places at which a deputation from the Anti-Corn-Law League has attended public meetings. Amongst them there are Huddersfield, Accrington, Woodside (over the Mersey from Liverpool), Kendal, Carlisle, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Sunderland, South Shields, Darlington, Rochdale, Holmfirth, Preston, Bacup, Derby, Nottingham, Hanley, Bilston, Dudley, Stourbridge, Wolverhampton, Ironbridge, Chorley, Bradford, and Burnley. (Applause.) It seems further that great things have been done at Huddersfield; you have heard that they have made a very large subscription to the fund. At Accrington, some hundreds of pounds are collected, or are in certain course of collection. At every one of these places committees are formed; and subscriptions of a greater or smaller amount will be sent to the fund. (Hear, hear.) In my own town, as you are all well aware—(cheers)—and I will take the opportunity of correcting a serious mistake which I have seen in one paper of large circulation,—that what Rochdale has done was in some considerable degree to be attributed to my exertions. (Applause.) Now, I tell you it is no such thing—that there is no man in Rochdale whom Rochdale could not easily spare; and that there are many men there who have zeal enough, and who have ability enough, and who are willing enough to take upon them to rouse—if it were necessary to rouse—the people of that town with respect to this question. (Applause, and “They won’t spare you.”) At Holmfirth, a handsome subscription has been contributed. At Bacup, only a large village,—a very small town, something like £500 has been subscribed. At Nottingham, the subscription was from £1,300 to £1,400, and it was now much increased. At Hanley, in the Potteries, there was a meeting of nearly 2,000 persons, a large proportion of whom were of the working classes; and a more enthusiastic and unanimous meeting I never beheld. At Bilston, and Stourbridge, and Dudley,—at Dudley especially,—there were also very large meetings,—at Dudley of 1,000 persons at least; and at many of these meetings repeated rounds of applause were given to show the approbation with which they regarded the labours of the Anti-Corn-Law League. At Coalbrookdale, preparations were made for bringing in the deputation in a coach and four, with a band of music and flags; and the whole population of the district turned out to welcome those whom they believed to be instrumental in saving their country. (Applause.) At Burnley, last night, (Burnley is a town with eight or ten thousand inhabitants), there was a meeting

consisting of 1,000 or 1,200 persons, which was addressed by the deputation from the League; and at the conclusion of the meeting, a subscription of £470 was made to the fund. (Loud applause.) I merely mention these things in order that you may not suppose that you are doing all the work. (Hear, hear.) There are many towns who are as zealous as Manchester, though, from peculiar circumstances, they are not able to make quite as much noise on the subject. (Applause.) And if ever it should happen (what I know will not happen) that the people of Manchester should become weary in this good cause, there are other towns which would rise up and establish themselves as the head-quarters of a new Anti-Corn-Law League, and which would carry on the great work that—I will not say—you would abandon. (Applause.) These towns, however, look up to Manchester as the metropolis of this empire at this moment. (Loud applause.) They are not looking to London to lead them on this question; they are not looking to any of the members of the aristocracy to be their leaders on this question. They think that in Manchester is the centre and heart of the great demonstration which is being made throughout the country, in condemnation of these iniquitous laws; and I bid you beware how you deceive the people who are looking up to you, who know the pretensions which you have made, who see what you have done hitherto, and who are confident that you would not do less in future; and I would ask every one of you here for your utmost exertions, in order that you may not disappoint the expectations of those who are relying on your leadership and direction, and who are willing to co-operate with you. (Hear.) I assure you that wherever we go, at every meeting that we address, for my own share, I hide my diminished head. I am humiliated at the manner in which I am treated at these meetings (applause); they look upon persons who come from the Anti-Corn-Law League as the very deliverers of the commerce of their country from the shackles in which it has been so long enthralled. (Cheers.) And thus we see what a responsibility lies upon us. The League has risen from a very small beginning. It had a great truth in hand, however; and that truth has grown and spread till it will soon be admitted by the whole population of this empire. But if the League has grown from so small beginnings to be the great and powerful organization which we can now without boasting say that it is, an organization which we may affirm consists not of a few individuals in this and the neighbouring towns, but which includes within its limits almost the whole of the middle classes and of the working population of Great Britain;—if the League has risen so much, and increased so much, the information which the most active members of the League have had aforetime has increased and become more valuable, just in the same proportion.

Why, I recollect the meeting which was held in the Chamber of Commerce here, when statements were sent forth, some five years ago, which startled the whole kingdom, by the accounts which they heard of the rivalry that was springing up in foreign countries, of the diminished amount of the value of our exports, and of the danger our foreign trade was incurring. But this was a very small part of the evil of the Corn Laws, although those statements were enough to startle the whole land, and almost every paper was filled with the report of that meeting. We were alarmed at these accounts of the rivalry of foreigners, of the Belgians, the Americans, the Swiss, and the French; and we looked a little further into the question. This further investigation led us to further discoveries: it was found that the sudden fluctuations in the price of corn, and the extraordinary imports which took place at particular periods, in consequence of the operation of the sliding scale, rendered it imperative upon us to ship large amounts in gold at particular periods, and so to derange, to a fearful extent, the monetary transactions of the country, thereby deranging all commercial transactions, and inflicting bankruptcy upon the merchant and manufacturer, and suffering and ruin upon the operative."

Mr. Bright proceeded to advert to the retaliating tariffs of other nations, the distress inflicted upon the population of our own land by the diminution of trade, the constant struggle for daily bread, and the consequent competition in the labour market diminishing wages, the wretched culture of land under protection, the exemption of landowners from their fair share of taxation, the miserable condition of the protected farmers and farm labourers, the insecurity of property in the agricultural districts; and claimed for the League the merit of being the best friend to the farmers, and to the community generally, that they had ever known. After commenting on an article of seventy pages in the *Quarterly Review*, and of tracts published in defence of the landowners' monopoly, he said:—

"I wish that they would let their tracts go out side by side with the anti-corn-law pamphlets, eight bales of which are sent off this night by the League—(cheers)—that the people might read one and then the other. I have no doubt that the mind of any man in his senses would come out right from the perusal. (Great cheering.) Now the League has arrived at a point when it is requisite that we should be exceedingly



cautious in our proceedings. I do not mean cautious lest anything should be caught up with a view to prosecution,—but cautious that, seeing so many are looking up to us for counsel and for guidance, that we do not take a false step. You know that we have been loaded with the obloquy of one of the great parties in the state, and have been tempted by the cajolery and coaxing of the other; and you know that the party who held the government of this country, and might have done for the term of their natural lives, if they had not been drawn aside by the most extraordinary infatuation and imbecility that men ever laboured under—you know that we have little more to expect from these men than from the others. And yet there are many of them who dream of coming into power again with an 8s. fixed duty! (Laughter.) These men, I say, are no more our friends than the others; and directly we pass the limit to which they are willing to extend relief, and which would serve themselves, they are as anxious to put an end to our progress as the most determined monopolist. (Hear, hear.) Now, then, what we have to take care of is, that this struggle is not made a mere plaything, a make-weight between these two parties. (Applause.) We have had enough of that. We must take care that politics are no longer the game of mere party, but that it is to be a game of substantial advantages for the people. (Applause.) I am sure there is power enough to do it. There is not a borough constituency in the kingdom that might not be induced to return members for free trade; for though most of them have been locked up by faction and in the hands of party, yet if you go to the shopkeepers and the rank and file of the constituency,—as you are doing through your deputations and lecturers and tracts, and show them the truth,—I say if you do this, I believe there are few men so bowed down and craven in spirit, that when they see the right way they will not come down from faction, forsake the party they have been bound up with from mere prejudice, and serve their country. (Applause.) You know that in Manchester and Rochdale, and many other towns, where the people are enlightened enough to see the truth, they have the power to return whom they like. Even when a monopolist candidate has dared to show his face here, he has always found it necessary, at least, to put on the garb of a free trader. (Laughter.) Now I wish the League to go on in this course. I believe the farmers are as anxious for good laws as we are, if they could but see the light. Once get rid of this immense mass of ignorance and prejudice that binds them to the present law; once get rid of these Corn Laws, the cementing influence which binds them all to one faction, and you will have full scope to bring them to support the interest which you believe to be the true interest of all, and as anxious to co-operate with you to obtain good government and every benefit which just and impartial laws could gain



for you. (Applause.) The time is now come when we must no longer look upon this infamous law as a mistake on the part of the aristocracy and the landowners,—it was no mistake of the law-makers, it was no accident, chance had nothing to do with it,—it was a crime, a crime of the deepest dye against the rights of industry and against the well-being of the British people, and—

‘Not all that heralds rake from coffin’d clay,  
Nor florid prose, nor honied lies of rhyme  
Can blazon evil deeds, or consecrate a crime.’

(Loud cheers.) The League is feared by the parties upon whom rests the guilt of this crime, and it is hated with unmitigated malignity. They do not greatly fear or hate a man who is a scion of their own order, they tolerate a set speech on a popular subject once in a session, and look upon this species of agitation as an amiable weakness in those who take a part in it: but they know they have cause to fear when men engaged in trade step out from the ranks and proclaim the injuries which aristocratic misrule is inflicting upon their countrymen, and by the most persevering exertions, by sacrifices of time and labour, and money and health, show their unalterable resolution to gather together the elements of an enlightened public opinion, and to overturn the foul usurpations which they can no longer bear. They know that much as a peer of the realm may value *his* order, we value *our* order at least as highly, that we have no longing for honours for ourselves, and no disposition to suffer tamely the wrongs inflicted by the class upon whom honours are now bestowed. To the landed aristocracy, to the monopolist and bankrupt portion of them we say—we do not ask you to repeal the Corn Law, and to loose your grasp from the subsistence of this most industrious and meritorious, and yet most trampled population,—we do not ask it from your sense of justice and from your love of right, for had you possessed either the one or the other this infamous law had never been enacted,—but we appeal to what is more honest and more virtuous, we appeal to the millions of our countrymen who are awakening to the wrongs they have so long and so patiently endured, and to the consciousness that it is you who have inflicted them,—we appeal to the honesty and intelligence of the middle classes of this empire, in the full confidence that the hour is at hand when their united voices shall be heard above the roar of party, and shall decree the immediate and the utter and everlasting extinction of this odious and inhuman and most unnatural law.”

At the conclusion of Mr. Bright’s speech, the whole company rose and gave repeated shouts of applause, the ladies waving their handkerchiefs, and the assemblage pre-

sented one of the most extraordinary and exciting spectacles ever witnessed on such an occasion. Mr. Brotherton rose to move a vote of thanks to Mr. Bright and Mr. Pottinger. He declared his opinion that but for the Corn Law the national debt would now have been paid off, the labourer would have been enjoying the just fruits of his labour, and the commerce of the country extended to every part of the world. He expressed his conviction that the Corn Laws would be repealed; it was only a question of time. Mr. David Ainsworth seconded the resolution, which was carried with applause.

Numerous as these meetings were, there was not the slightest flagging of interest in the subject. At all times Manchester has visitors from every part of the kingdom, and those strangers were all anxious to hear the proceedings of a body, the fame of which was now spread throughout the land. Foreigners also were present, for the question at issue was one which might have a world-wide application.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### SOIREES IN OTHER PLACES.

At the successive weekly assemblages of the League, in Manchester, notice was made of numerous meetings in other parts of the kingdom during the last two months of 1842, some of which require to be recorded at rather greater length. On the 31st of October the Metropolitan Anti-Corn-Law Association met, Mr. P. A. Taylor in the chair, and resolved that the various associations in and around London should meet once a week, to promote the registration of members, and the enlightenment of the public mind on the subject of free trade. On the 14th of November the committee reported the division of the metropolis and its neighbourhood into fourteen districts, and that arrangements had been made for weekly meetings up to March, 1843, and for the printing of tracts for distribution. The meeting was addressed by Mr. P. A. Taylor, Mr. James Wilson, Colonel Thompson, Dr. Price, Mr. R. R. Moore, and others, and the proceedings gave proof that the arduous work of instructing the vast metropolis would be vigorously carried out.

On the 23rd November, the first of a series of deeply interesting soirées to take place in Yorkshire, in furtherance of the great object of Corn-Law repeal, was celebrated in the spacious saloon, beautifully decorated for the occasion, of the Philosophical Hall, Huddersfield. "The occasion,"

says the *Leeds Mercury*, "was one of high importance, not only for the dignity and benevolence of the object contemplated, but for the enthusiastic spirit manifested by the assembly of both sexes, of the first respectability, extensive in numbers, and intelligent and influential in its character." More than 600 persons sat down to tea, and more than double that number would have been present had it been possible to provide accommodation. William Brooks, Esq., was called to the chair. W. R. C. Stansfield, Esq., M.P., moved: "That this meeting regards the laws which prevent the free importation of corn as the chief cause of the deep, long-continued, and increasing distress under which the nation suffers, and looks to the total repeal of those laws as the safest, shortest, and most effectual remedy. The deputation from the League consisted of Mr. Cobden, Mr. Bright, and Mr. H. Ashworth, of Bolton, who successively addressed the meeting. J. T. Clay, Esq., of Rastrick, after moving a resolution pledging the meeting to promote the raising of £50,000, handed to the chairman, on behalf of his uncle, who was unable to attend, a cheque for £300. Mr. F. Schwann handed his cheque for £50, which he said he had saved by being a "teetotaler." A Voice—"I wonder if Mr. Wm. Brook will do the same." Mr. Brook: "I will." Messrs. Geo. Mallinson & Son, and George Crossland & Son, followed with £50 each, and other contributions poured in till they amounted to nearly £1,000.

On the 28th November, a meeting of the Dundee Anti-Corn-Law Association was held, Mr. Edward Baxter in the chair, at which resolutions were passed, approving of the plans of the League. Lord Kinnaird said that the farmers had a good right to complain, for the present pernicious system held out a premium to the worst kind of cultivation, and a succession of white crops exhausted the land. His lordship proceeded to contrast the mode of farming in England with that universally, and with such good effects,

adopted in Scotland, where, by proper management, a much less favourable soil was rendered much more productive. Were the English subjected to the same competition as the Scotch farmers were, and competition was all they wanted, their dormant energies would be roused, and the land would be doubled in value. All classes of the community would be benefited by an abolition of all restrictions on food and commerce; but none more than the lords of the soil. Steady prices would thus be obtained by the farmer—that was all that was required.

On the 8th December a numerous and highly respectable party of ladies and gentlemen took tea in the Assembly Room, and in the body of the Theatre, Rochdale, and afterwards congregated in the Theatre, the gallery being open to the public, and crammed with earnest listeners. John Fenton, Esq., late M.P. for the borough, was in the chair, and opened its proceedings by introducing Mr. Buckingham, who delivered an eloquent address on the general principles of free trade, proving their entire harmony with the evident designs of a wise and benevolent Providence. Dr. Bowring followed and spoke at some length on the influence of free-trade principles in the diffusion of knowledge, the spread of universal peace, and in the advancement of all that was worthy of the pursuit of a free and enlightened nation, reaping for it a renown far more lasting than the glories of conquest. The applause which Dr. Bowring's speech excited was renewed with the greatest enthusiasm when Mr. Cobden rose. He addressed himself to the large body of working men who were present, in a tone which produced a powerful effect. He placed before them in a most striking light the folly and injustice of allowing a small number of deluded and ignorant *lads* to prevent the expression of public opinion on the great question of the bread tax, by which the character of the masses of the people was in great danger of being ruined. Mr. Bright had a reception, which, in his



case, proved that the prophet was not without honour in his own country. He reminded his townsmen of their former service in this noble cause, of their having sent a staunch free trader to Parliament, and of the high character they had gained with their countrymen; and he assured them that he should be ashamed of them if they came second to any town in the kingdom in the great contest now waging with the accursed monopoly, which was destroying their commerce. The subscriptions then commenced, and the following were announced: The Chairman gave £100; James King and Sons, £100; the workpeople employed by Bright and Brothers, £12 3s.; John Hoyle, £50; Thos. Booth, £50; John Petrie & Co., £50; James Midgley, £50; E. G. Kay, £50; Robt. Kelsall, £50; Leech, Tweedale, and Co., £50, and others raising the amount to £1,320 6s. 6d., in addition to £375 subscribed by five individuals at the Manchester meeting.

Two meetings were held, at Leeds, on the same week, the object of both being the promotion of the great fund. The first was preliminary and consisted of merchants, manufacturers, tradesmen, and other employers of labour. Mr. Baines, M.P., was in the chair; and Mr. Cobden, Dr. Bowring, Mr. Aldam, and Colonel Thompson, were present. The second and most important meeting was a soirée, held in the saloon of the Music Hall, its object being, to use the language of the *Leeds Mercury*, designed to promote the abolition of the Corn Law, and of all restrictions on the trade in food, in connection with the splendid and benevolent efforts then being put forth by the National Anti-Corn-Law League. The same organ goes on to say, that the demand for the tickets on and prior to the day of the festival was unprecedented; the prudent issue previously determined upon,—which, however, was only limited by the accommodation of the spacious hall itself,—was consequently exhausted before the day of the soiree, and, of necessity, great numbers of applicants had to ex

perience the disappointment of exclusion from one of the most pleasant and enthusiastic meetings ever witnessed. The important sanction of the ladies was especially vouchsafed to this renewed struggle in the cause of humanity and justice ; many ladies, along with the speakers, and a number of the leading liberal gentlemen of the town, occupied the orchestra. The gallery was occupied by those who were admitted after tea. In the decorations of the room there was every variety consistent with moderation, good taste, and neatness. Elevated above the orchestra was the motto, "Free Trade ; best security for universal peace," beautifully painted on white drapery, and enclosed with a crimson wreath. In front of the orchestra was the motto, "Free Trade," tastefully designed of laurel leaves, and also on white ground and bordered by crimson drapery. On the right of the orchestra was a pendant banner, inscribed, in gold, "Agriculture and manufactures," with the appropriate emblematical attendants of the labourer in the harvest field, and the weaver at the loom. On the left of the orchestra was another pendant banner, with a beautiful design of "Britannia." In front of the gallery was the inscription, "No taxes on food or restrictions on labour." On the right was a richly gilt banner, inscribed, "The rights of the people ; cheap bread and unrestricted labour." On the left was another equally elegant banner, inscribed, "Cheap sugar : you have made the negro happy ; remember your needy operatives at home." The pillars supporting the gallery were gracefully encircled by wreaths of laurels, and other parts of the room partook of the same lively decorations. Among the gentlemen present at the meeting were William Aldam, M.P., Richard Cobden, M.P., Dr. Bowring, M.P., Wm. Busfield, M.P., Colonel Perronet Thompson, James G. Marshall, Alderman Stansfeld, Ald. Pawson, Alderman Gaunt, Alderman Bateson, Alderman Lupton, Alderman Luccock, Alderman Willans, Alderman Maclean, Rev. T. Scales, Rev. Mr. Crawford, Rev. J. E.

Giles, Rev. C. Wicksteed, Rev. J. Cummins, and Rev. J. Fox. Mr. J. G. Marshall was called to the chair; and the meeting was addressed by Messrs. W. Aldam, Hamer Stansfeld, Dr. Bowring, Colonel Thompson, E. Birchall, R. Cobden, W. Busfield, E. Baines, jun., J. Bower, the Rev. J. E. Giles, and T. Plint. Before the meeting separated, subscriptions were announced to the amount of £765, amongst which were Messrs. Marshall & Co., £150, Stansfeld, Brown & Co., £50, Maclean and March, £50, Wm. Pawson, Esq., £50, Edwin Birchall and Sons, £50, Wilkinson & Co., £50, Wm. Lupton & Co., £30.

The soirée, at Bradford, had a like animated character, notwithstanding the absence of some of the leading free traders, and the Temperance Hall was quite filled. The *Bradford Observer*, in reporting the proceedings, characterised Dr. Bowring's speech as sufficient of itself to give *eclat* to the meeting, and says that the Rev. J. Ackworth laid bare the sophistry which would throw discredit upon a minister for appearing in such assemblages. He was followed by Mr. Thomas Plint, of Leeds, who made a vigorous onslaught upon the fallacies of the protectionists. The other speakers were Messrs. R. Milligan, now (1852) member for the borough, W. Byles, proprietor of *The Observer*, William Busfield, M.P., Mr. Ackroyd, of Otley, Hamer Stansfeld, of Leeds, R. R. Moore, Rev. Walter Scott, and J. Russell. Amongst the subscription were H. Leah, £100, Milligan, Forbes & Co., £100; R. and J. Garnett, £50, Titus Salt, £50, and Rennie, Tetley, & Co., £50.

On the 6th December, a numerous meeting was held in the school room of the Independent Chapel, James-street, Blackburn, which was handsomely decorated for the occasion. After tea, Mr. William Eccles was called to the chair, and the company, including many ladies, was addressed by Mr. Edmund Ashworth, of Turton, Mr. John Brooks, Mr. Cobden, and myself, forming the deputation from the League, and Mr. Potter, of Darwen, who led the

way to the subscription, by putting his own name down for £50; and then followed Mr. W. Eccles, for £50, J. and W. Pilkington, for £50, Joseph Eccles, for £50, T. and R. Eccles, for £50, other smaller sums swelling the amount to upwards of £400.

On the 12th December, Colonel Thompson and Mr. Paulton, attended a numerous meeting, at Accrington, the Rev. J. Harbottle, in the chair, and subscriptions were made to the amount of £350. On the 14th, Mr. Bright and Mr. Moore visited Belper, in Derbyshire, and resolutions were passed, approving of the plans of the League. Messrs. W. G. and J. Strutt had previously subscribed £300, at the Midland Counties' meeting, and Messrs. Geo. Brittle & Co. had paid £100 to the Metropolitan Association. On the 12th a meeting, called by the Lord Provost, was held in Glasgow, James Oswald, Esq., in the chair. The O'Connorites endeavoured by clamour and great violence of language to disturb the meeting, but some of the most riotous having been removed by the police, the resolutions in favour of the plans of the League were carried almost unanimously. A similar disturbance was attempted, at Preston, on the same week, on the occasion of a visit from Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright, but it only delayed the subscription for a few days without diminishing its amount.

On the 19th December there was a tea party at Bury, attended by 800 persons, R. Ashton, Esq., of Lime-field, in the chair. It was addressed by Dr. Bowering, Mr. Brotherton, Mr. John Brooks, Mr. Cobden, Mr. Edmund Ashworth, and Mr. R. R. Moore. Amongst the subscribers to the £50,000 fund were Mr. R. Walker, M.P., £50, R. Ashton, £100, Walker, Smith & Co., £100, Thomas and James Wrigley, £50, Edmund Grundy, £50, J. Grundy, jun., £50. When the subscriptions had got down to 5s., a working man rose, and said such as he could not give half-crowns, but if a box were sent round they would give what they



could. "Take that," said the chairman, and threw his hat towards the speaker, amid great laughter and cheers. "And take that," said Mr. Brooks, throwing his hat in another direction; "and that," shouted other gentlemen, and a dozen of hats were flying towards various parts of the rooms, returning loaded with coppers to the amount of £6 or £7. Mr. Cobden said that he would rather see these spontaneous, though humble contributions, than if there had been as many sovereigns as pence. The contributions in the room amounted to £796.

Wolverhampton, like Manchester, had made its first election of representatives in 1832, and every subsequent election, a free-trade demonstration—an emphatic protest against the landowners' monopoly. To visit this borough, so distinguished, the League deputed Mr. Bright and Mr. Moore. The chair was taken by Mr. John Barker, a county magistrate, and he was supported by Messrs. Joseph Walker, William Walker, Benjamin Walton, J. Bradshaw, S. Cartwright, H. Walton, Alex. Walton, and other influential gentlemen of the town. Mr. Villiers, one of the members, the leader of the anti-corn-law movement in the Commons, had written that he could not leave London at that time, much to his regret. Mr. Thornely, the other member, gave an exceedingly interesting account of his observations in the United States, where he had recently been and of the mutual advantages the two countries would derive from mutual exchanges. Mr. Bright and Mr. Moore followed in speeches which excited great enthusiasm. Similar meetings, attended by Mr. Bright, were held at Stourbridge and Dudley. On the 29th December, Mr. Cobden, Mr. Brooks, and Mr. Moore, visited Warrington. The venerable and firm-minded John Rylands, was in the chair, and introduced the deputation to the meeting. In the course of Mr. Cobden's speech, he said:—

"The Earls of Radnor and Ducie were for the repeal of the Corn Laws. The Earl of Radnor was an extensive landowner, and so was



the Earl of Ducie. The League had also with them Earl Spencer. That noblemen continually resided upon his property, and frequently presided at agricultural meetings. He was for a repeal of those laws. There was also the Duke of Bedford—a family who, notwithstanding the backsliding of Lord John Russell, had occasion to be proud of their lineage. At the time Mr. Villiers brought forward his motion in the House of Commons, for the repeal of those laws, he (Mr. Cobden) believed that the largest landowners, and some of the best agriculturists of England and Ireland were for that measure. There was Mr. Sharman Crawford, who was an enthusiastic opponent of those laws. There was Mr. Gore Langton, one of the members for Somersetshire; he opposed them also. There, too, was Mr. Villiers Stuart, member for the county of Waterford. He (Mr. Cobden) never heard a better speech than that delivered by that gentleman, the last time Mr. Villiers brought the subject forward. He viewed it as a moral question, and gave utterance to the most acute piece of reasoning that ever was put forth upon the subject. Then there was Mr. Grantly Berkeley, the member for Gloucestershire. He (Mr. Cobden) mentioned those names to show what a bug-bear it was to name the aristocracy as being totally opposed to the repeal of these laws.”

Previous to the breaking up of the meeting, it was announced that the subscription to the League fund was £320, and that it would probably amount to £600 in a few days.

While the leading members of the League were thus indoctrinating the country—for the press was spreading every where the truths they uttered, and giving prompt answer to every fallacy that was, from time to time, advanced; and while hundreds of less prominent voluntary labourers in the cause were working hard in all the business details of the agitation, the lecturers were, at some forty meetings a week, giving effective instructions to the people. Even the working men of their number were a match in argument to the few educated persons who, here and there, attempted to defend monopoly. But two or three of them had encountered a fierce physical opposition, from their pressing, perhaps a little too vehemently, the injustice of sacrificing the manufacturing to the agricultural interest, so as to give farmers some suspicion that the demand for the repeal of the Corn Laws was only that the

burthen might be shifted from the shoulders of the former to those of the latter. Thinking that farmers and farm labourers would be more easily convinced if they heard less of injustice to manufacturers and weavers, than of injustice and injury to themselves, I accepted an invitation to address the farmers at Over, in Cheshire, on their market day, and proceeded there alone on October 12th, to make the experiment. A clergyman, seeing the announcement of the lecture, had gone amongst the farmers in the Market Hall, and told them that they ought not to attend, on the ground that the teachings of the League were highly immoral and irreligious, and, in the then circumstances of the country, seditious. This rather excited the curiosity to hear, and the hall was well filled. Mr. Slater, of Woodford Hall, a farmer of 300 acres of land, took the chair, and introduced me to the meeting. I met the charge of irreligion by reading a portion of a speech which had been delivered by the Rev. Gilbert Elliot, of Kirby Thorpe, who had quoted Archbishop Cranmer as an authority against the deep sin of artificially raising the price of food. Having thus cleared the way, I argued :

1. That so far from the Corn Laws having secured steadiness of prices, they have caused extraordinary fluctuations, and make farming a matter of dangerous gambling and speculation.

2. That the sliding scale has caused a fall of prices at the very period when the farmer had a right to expect a fair remuneration for his capital and industry.

3. That the prices promised by the laws of 1815, 1822, and 1828, and on which promised prices the farmer had made his contracts, have not been realized, and that consequently his progress has been constantly downward.

4. That legislation may raise the rent of land where the number of acres is limited, but cannot sustain, beyond the level of other businesses, the profits of farmers whose number is not limited.

5. That the farmer had been injured by the depression of trade and manufactures; which has greatly lessened the market for his produce, and, consequently, greatly reduced it in price.

6. That this reduction has not been occasioned by Sir Robert Peel's tariff, inasmuch as it has fallen heavily on cheese and butter, the import duties on which have not been touched.

7. That farmers suffer from the depression of trade by the increase of poor rates, occasioned by the return to agricultural districts of labourers who had previously found profitable employment in towns.

8. That farmers further suffer from the difficulty of finding suitable employment for such of their sons and daughters as are not needed upon the farm.

9. That labourers suffer alike from the latter cause, and that their wages do not rise and fall with the rise and fall of provisions.

10. That the land-tax is not an exclusive burthen requiring an equivalent, but a commutation, which, in common justice, ought to have advanced with the advance of the rent of land, and the increase of other public burthens.

11. That tithes are not an exclusive burthen on the land, tithes being a *property* held by an older tenure than the tenure of land; and that their abolition would only tend to raise rents.

12. That poor rates are not an exclusive burthen upon land, all trading and manufacturing property being equally liable.

13. That landowners not only bear no exclusive burthens, but are favoured with numerous exemptions, in probate and legacy duties, on auction duties, insurance duties, taxes on farm horses, &c.

14. That they have already a great natural protection in the cost of import, ranging from 9s. to 20s. per quarter, equal to from 27s. to 60s. on the acre of wheat crop.

15. That they have a natural protection in the attachment of farmers to the soil, and their inability to turn to other pursuits, and consequently their eager competition for farms.

16. That this competition, accompanied by the distress of their customers, has brought them into a state of destitution, from which nothing can release them but free trade, not merely in corn, but in all the articles which they consume ; and

17. That landowners themselves, by painful experience, must soon find that agriculture and trade are twins, waxing and waning together.

I had carried a goodly number of tracts with me, and the demand for them at the close of the meeting showed that the farmers were eager for information when offered to them in a friendly spirit. The publication of my address led to other invitations, and I subsequently visited, in succession, Macclesfield, Congleton, Sandbach, Middlewich, Northwich, Nantwich, Audlem, and Chester, choosing market days, when farmers could attend, and having always deeply attentive audiences, without experiencing the slightest interruption, the only attempt at opposition being at Nantwich, where a chartist, a stranger, got up and said the manufacturers were agitating for the repeal of the Corn Laws only that they might sell more goods. This notable discovery excited a burst of laughter, everybody seeing that if more goods were wanted, more persons would be employed to produce them. The man, nettled at the laugh, challenged me to meet him, at Nantwich, at some future day, and discuss the whole question. I told him that I would not go an inch out of my way to argue with one who could meet his match in any working man there, upon which an old man in the gallery of the chapel called out to him : " I'll meet thee, man ; and though I am nowt but an old shoemaker I'll soon do for thee." The challenge was not accepted.

I went to Audlem, because I wished to be at a place which had no dependence on Manchester. That was just the very place, I was told, because, although there had been ten families there employed in shoemaking, the distress in the manufacturing districts, where their shoes had found a market, had thrown them out of employment, and they were all either supported by the parish, or wandering about seeking for work. A very pretty independence it was, I said to the people there. At Chester I had engaged the Theatre for my lecture; but it was the property of the Dean and Chapter, and had formed part of the Convent of St. Werburg, and I had speedy notice from their lessee, that the place was licensed for plays and interludes, and that the manager would not be permitted to let it for a lecture on the Corn Laws. Punch might squeak, and beat Judy there—licentious plays and broad farces might be performed there—but the ancient walls of St. Werburgh would be profaned if any voice was heard there denouncing the landlord laws! The news of the refusal soon spread through the ancient city, and I had a numerous meeting including a goodly attendance of farmers, in one of the Old Cloth Halls, erected when Chester fair was the great mart for manufacturers supplying the Principality of Wales. My Nantwich chartist friend followed me there, but did not venture to say anything, for the meeting went thoroughly with me. The same man appeared at a great meeting addressed by me, a few days afterwards, at Liverpool, but there the audience went so enthusiastically with me, that he could not muster courage to address it. The question arose, by whom were the men paid who thus “dodged” the movements of the League members and the lecturers, and attempted to disturb their meetings, whenever they saw, or thought they saw, any chance of success?

At the close of December I visited Chesterfield, and delivered an address in the large assembly-room, which



was filled with an audience almost exclusively tenant farmers, or landlords cultivating their own land ; and from the conversation held afterwards, for many of them remained to talk, it appeared that there was a pretty wide conviction that protection had been injurious, rather than beneficial, to all but the landowners ; that the only protection that could be given was equitable leases, with corn rents ; that under either a fixed duty, or any modification of the sliding scale, the farmer would always be liable to uncertainty, and that his safety would be in total repeal, which would enable him to make a fresh bargain with his landlord, and start upon a sure foundation. One old farmer said to me, " Sir, I came into the room determined not to believe a word you said." I told him he had made an honest confession, if he had not made a wise resolution, and asked him if he had stood fast by his determination ? " Yes," he said, " I did until you paused and said, ' Now, farmers, what are you going to do with your sons,' and told us about the farm being but the nest where the birds were to fly from ; and then I thought of my two sons, and what I would do with them. I have been trying for two years to get them situations in some of the manufacturing towns, but nobody will have them, because trade is so bad ; and I can't make them farmers, for that business is as bad as trade. When I thought on them I listened with both ears, and I think you are about right."

After all the agitation of this eventful year, and after the almost universal acknowledgment that the principle of protection was indefensible, the belief began to grow that when Parliament met again further changes would be proposed, of sufficient width to satisfy a portion of the public supposed to be ready for compromise. In reference to this expectation, in my paper of December 31st, I said :—

" The year of unsettlement has almost past ; will that which approaches be productive of any measure that, so founded on justice, can be called a settlement ? It depends

upon the people. They have the means in their own hands, if they but use them; if they would but exercise self-reliance, and not look to ministers to do that for them which they ought to do for themselves. At the beginning of a year it is natural to speculate on what events that year may produce, but speculation does not *influence* the event. The farmer may make shrewd conjectures as to the next summer's weather; but he goes on preparing his ground, laying down his manure, and putting in his seed. The politician may make shrewd conjectures as to the probable course of next session's legislation; but he ought not to satisfy himself with curious speculation, and abstain from influencing that course to the utmost extent in his power. The people should not stand idly looking for favourable circumstances; they ought to endeavour to create them. They ought, like the farmer, to prepare their ground, and put in their seed, that, whether there be bright sunshine, or clouds and rain, there may be a good return. Looking to what Peel *will* do, without any effort to direct what Peel *shall* do, is as absurd as it would be of the farmer to expect all from the genial warmth of spring and the ripening heat of summer, without doing anything himself. "What will Peel do?" "What will the agricultural interest do?" "What will the tories do?" "What will the whigs do?" These are all foolish questions. The only question ought to be, "What shall we make them do?"

"All governments are conservative; all resistive, rather than impulsive; all either obstructive of popular opinion, or its unwilling followers. The best yield only when they can no longer resist. Their maxim is, that what has been ought to be. Even in republican America a wrong when *vêted* becomes a right. The rule of Bentham, that the suffering many can obtain justice only by making the ruling few uneasy, though seemingly harsh, is of universal application. Governments will not effect reforms until they are compelled; and it is the same with party factions. Our

tories resist till they can resist no longer ; and when any little thing is done, that little becomes a *settlement*, a part of venerable institutions ; a finality, to be zealously protected from enlargement, till something better is extorted. Such being our opinion, we are impatient at the constant iteration of the question, ‘ What will Peel do ? ’ A people determined on achieving their rights would not waste their time on such idle speculations. ‘ What will the emperor do ? ’ may be an appropriate question in Russia or Austria, but we have a public opinion here that is not uninfluential, and we have a sort of representation that might be made to be beneficially influential ; and *our* business ought to be to make both operative upon legislation.

“ But though it is idle to be always asking what Peel will do, we may profitably employ ourselves in considering his position, for there are many who will not agitate for the removal of a wrong unless they are assured of favouring circumstances ; and we think that ministers are in a position as obstructives which they cannot sustain, if the people, acting on Bentham’s rule, only do their duty.

“ In the first place we have a declining revenue, and the necessities of ministers will compel them again to revise their tariff and to lower the duties on sugar, coffee, and timber. These changes may be reasonably looked for. But there will be some juggle attempted, which the people must be prepared to defeat. There is a talk that the duty on foreign sugar is to be reduced to 30s., and on colonial to 16s. ; and some of the whig journalists are prepared to support such change, notwithstanding the fact that the whole of the 14s. of difference will go into the pockets of the West India planters, and that the duty on Brazilian sugar will still keep it out of the reach of the working classes, who, at lower prices, would be great consumers. It may be pretty nearly conjectured, “ What Peel will do.” The pressure from without, must be directed, so that the half measure may be deprived of its most objectionable characteristic,—

discriminating duties, that take from the public what does not find its way into the exchequer, but into the pockets of the colonists.

“We may also reasonably anticipate some change in the Corn Law, which, while it has been as effective as that which preceded it in repressing our trade with corn growing countries, has been ineffective in protecting the farmer, by throwing in all the foreign supply at the only time of the year when he has corn to sell. But here again we must beware of a juggle. The attempt will either be to gain over the half-thinkers, who talk of “reciprocity” by different scales of duty, from countries, according to their tariffs, or to detach from the anti-corn-law agitation the half-free-trade men, by the adoption of what is called a “moderate” fixed duty. Here again the public must be on its guard; and the pressure from without must compel the only measure that can be beneficial to all, *total repeal*.

“Commercial reforms we shall have; the poverty within, and the pressure from without, will bring them. Shall we have any Parliamentary reform? The answer is a reference to the proceedings at Birmingham, where the chartists have declared, that the middle classes shall *not* aid them in procuring an extension of the suffrage. The O’Connors and the Coopers have thrown the cause of reform back ten years.”

The League was not disposed to wait and see what Peel would do. It was building a great Free Trade Hall, in Manchester, and contemplated the holding of meetings in one of the principal theatres in London, and a movement to enlist the whole population of the metropolis on its side. With these views it published the following address to the citizens:—

“Fellow-Countrymen,—The Anti-Corn-Law League has awakened the practical attention of our country to the unhappy condition of the middle and working classes engaged

in manufactures, commerce, and agriculture. The League has declared the remedy to be, *the abolition of the Corn Laws and all other monopolies.*

“The League gratefully sees that the inhabitants of the metropolis entertain, in common with all other classes of their countrymen, an anxious desire to aid our common object.

“Your fellow-citizens of the Common Council of London, almost unanimously, and in a language too emphatic and impressive to be misunderstood, have denounced the Corn Laws in the following resolution:

“‘HUMPHREY, Mayor.

“‘A common council holden in the chamber of the Guildhall of the city of London, on Thursday, the 8th day of December, 1842,—

“‘Resolved: That the continued and increasing depression of the manufacturing, commercial, and agricultural interests of this country, and the wide-spreading distress of the working classes, are most alarming:—manufacturers without a market, and shipping without freight; capital without investment, trade without profit; and farmers struggling under a system of high rents, with prices falling, as the means of consumption by the people fail; a working population rapidly increasing, and a daily decreasing demand for its labour; union houses overflowing as workshops are deserted; Corn Laws to restrain importation, and inducing a starving people to regard the laws of their country with a deep sense of their injustice. These facts call for the immediate application of adequate remedies. That this court anxiously appeals to the first minister of the crown to give practical effect to his declarations in favour of free trade, by bringing forward at the earliest possible period in the ensuing session of Parliament, such measures, for securing the unrestricted supply of food, and the employment of the people, as may effectually remove a condition of depression and distress too widely prevailing, and too rapidly increasing, to consist with the safety of the community, and the preservation of our social and political institutions.

“‘MEREWETHER.’

“The Council of the National Anti-Corn-Law League concurs in this faithful and humiliating description of the state of our beloved country, and it also cordially and fully approves this rightful course suggested for the restoration of our national prosperity. The League earnestly seeks



to become, immediately and ardently, united with you in the *national* contest for the repeal of the bread tax.

“The League congratulates you on the adoption of the above metropolitan resolution, and recognizes the same enlightened object, so forcibly advocated in a memorable petition of your citizens, on a similar occasion, in the year 1820. A quarter of a century since, it was the proud distinction of the merchant citizens of London to lead the way in the path of free trade. We recal to your minds the following imperishable principles of that petition,—the goodly seed which has since yielded invaluable fruit:

“That foreign commerce is eminently conducive to the wealth and prosperity of a country, by enabling it to import the commodities for the production of which the soil, climate, capital, and industry of other countries are best calculated, and to export, in payment, those articles for which its own situation is better adapted.

“That the maxim of *buying in the cheapest market and selling in the dearest*, which regulates every merchant in his individual dealings, is strictly applicable as the best rule for the trade of the whole nation.

“That, unfortunately, a policy the very reverse of this, has been, and is, more or less adopted and acted upon by the government of this and every other country, each trying to exclude the productions of other countries, with the specious and well-meant design of encouraging its own productions; thus inflicting on the bulk of its subjects, who are consumers, the necessity of submitting to privations in the quantity or quality of commodities, and thus rendering what ought to be the source of mutual benefit and of harmony amongst states, a constantly recurring occasion of jealousy and hostility.

“That an investigation of the effects of the restrictive system at this time, is peculiarly called for, as it may, in the opinion of the petitioners, lead to a strong presumption that the distress which now so generally prevails is considerably aggravated by that system.

“That in declaring, as your petitioners do, their conviction of the impolicy and injustice of the restrictive system, and in desiring every practicable relaxation of it, they have in view only such parts of it as are not connected, or are only subordinately so, with the public revenue. It is against every restrictive regulation of trade not essential to the revenue; against all duties merely protective from foreign competition; and against the excess of such duties as are partly for the purpose of

revenue, and partly for that of protection, that the prayer of the present petition is respectfully submitted to the wisdom of Parliament.'

"Fellow-Countrymen!—This was your declaration in 1820.

"We have only followed in the wake of your own prophetic memorial; we are acting on its instruction. Aid us in our labours to give full effect to its indisputable truths. If, in 1820, the pressure on our population was deemed grievous, is it not *now* almost intolerable? The Council of the League seeks a union with you. The League has already enlisted in the common cause the great majority of their fellow-countrymen, in almost every town, village, and hamlet of Great Britain.

"The provinces of England, Wales, and Scotland, have responded to our call; they have united with the League for the abolition of the Corn Laws, and for the concurrent abolition of all monopolies. The immediate efforts of the whole community are needed to rescue the people, our institutions, and our country from impending calamities.

"You will necessarily inquire of us, how is our great object to be accomplished? Our answer is, by enlightening our fellow-countrymen of all classes on our right to the privileges claimed in your own petition of 1820.

"The National Anti-Corn-Law League has undertaken to obtain justice for the people. The League deemed it a necessary duty to instruct their fellow-countrymen by lectures and by other means, and to place in the hands of every Parliamentary elector in the kingdom a library of knowledge on this vital subject. This preliminary action on public opinion was indispensable; and to effect our ultimate success the sum of £50,000 is proposed to be raised. This large sum is now in course of contribution.

"The merchants and manufacturers of Manchester have given effect to our appeal; they have not only placed in our hands munificent donations, but also promised to increase their subscriptions, if necessary. Liverpool, Bolton,

Preston, Blackburn, Rochdale, Bury, Stockport, Oldham, and all the large communities of Lancashire ; the boroughs of Leeds, Bradford, Halifax, Huddersfield, Sheffield, and the other towns of Yorkshire have supplied large contributions.

“ The cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow have already made arrangements to promote by public meetings our holy alliance.

“ Inhabitants and citizens of London, and fellow-countrymen ! We address you collectively and individually. We are daily gaining the co-operation of men of wealth, intelligence, and influence, who are fast swelling our ranks ; men who have only lately known the peril of their country and the justice of our cause.

“ To the metropolis of Great Britain the country now looks. Place yourselves at the head of this movement. Union is power. Organise ; assemble in public meetings ; subscribe ; aid us.

(Signed)

“ G. WILSON,

“ Chairman of the National Anti-Corn-Law League.”











